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EDITORIAL

THE WIZ AND THE PRESS

In the uncritical media coverage of this election, Ronald Reagan is beginning to resemble the Great Oz, putting on a sound-and-light show for the rubes from Kansas. Unlike Frank Morgan, however, he is a very good wizard and a very bad man.

Where are the journalistic Totos to pull back the curtain concealing the mountebank at the console? In its performance thus far, the media might be more accurately compared to another canine, Nipper, the RCA mascot. Not since the savaging of George McGovern in 1972 has the press been so attentive to its master's (read, owner's) voice.

At the Republican Convention in Dallas, President Reagan launched his "opportunity society" campaign with a barrage of distortions, including: poverty is disappearing (the 1983 figures show the highest poverty rate in almost twenty years), American families are in better financial shape than they were four years ago (median family income is lower). Such assertions were passed on without comment by a press mesmerized by Geraldine Ferraro's tax returns.

When President Reagan made his little joke about outlawing Russia and bombing the Soviet Union, the press outside the United States lit up like a switchboard; the analytical reporting and commentary went on for days. Back home, however, the gaffe was treated as back-page filler.

Concluding its review of Ferraro's finances, the media chose to emphasize the fact that her net worth is greater than George Bush's. Campaign contributions to the G.O.P. are rolling in so fast that the party could raise more than $50 million by the end of the campaign, yet the "special interests candidate" label sticks to Walter Mondale. If Ronald Reagan is a Teflon President, it may be only because the press never turned on the heat.

LEADEROLOGY
Stephen F. Cohen

DOGGIE BAGUETTES
Calvin Trillin

THE CON-CON CAN HAPPEN
Michael Waldman

STEELWORKERS IN CICERO
David Bensman

ANTONIA FRASER'S 17TH-CENTURY WOMEN
Maureen Quilligan

CHRISTA WOLF
Ernst Pawel

BEYOND NEOLIBERALISM

TOWARD A NEW POLITICS ON THE LEFT

ALAN WOLFE

The left, unable to re-examine its past and develop a compelling agenda for the future, stands in marked contrast to the right and center, neither of which is supposed to be particularly innovative. In 1964 the American right seemed wiped out by the public humiliation of Barry Goldwater. Yet instead of retreating into therapy and life style, New Right activists redoubled their efforts, gained academic and intellectual respect for their ideas and began the process that took them to the White House sixteen years later. Oddly enough, conservatives, dedicated to the old, flirted with the new; neoconservatives, by challenging the isolationism and pure antistatist zealotry of the old right, paved the way to respectability and power.

Now there is a new group of "neos" on the scene, of the liberal persuasion. With Gary Hart, who evidently both despises and exemplifies the term, neoliberalism showed surprising strength in 1984 and established itself as the dominant discourse for the future of the Democratic Party. The neoliberals have also faced their heritage and found it wanting. They question whether government can provide services better than the market can. They call for military reform and selective intervention instead of the old cold war reflexes that are the most unfortunate byproducts of postwar liberalism. They like to see themselves as skeptics and truth-tellers, mentioning the great unmentionables: business is good, the draft must be reinstated, life is unfair, the home-mortgage deduction shames the tax code. Of course, none of it goes very far, and there is a double standard in neoliberals' praise of busi-

(*Continued on Page 241*)

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LETTERS.

SIREN SONGS AND TROTSKYITES

St. Paul

The article by Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers in the September 1 *Nation*, "Big Labor Is Hurting—Itself," provided an excellent discussion of the problems facing the labor movement in the United States. However, other factors have contributed to the present sad state of organized labor. First, liberal programs of the past fifty years have brought a large share of the working class into the middle class. This fact almost insures that labor will be conservative in its voting habits. The other side of that coin reveals the poor job labor has done to educate its membership on the importance of liberal programs for their well-being. If such education had occurred, working people might not have been susceptible to the siren song of "high taxes/big government," chanted by conservatives.

Another issue revolves around the rights of minority groups and women, particularly the issue of affirmative action. Here in St. Paul, Mayor George Latimer, a Democrat, has attempted to institute new hiring programs based on affirmative action. Such programs were greeted with storms of protest, particularly by the police and fire departments. As a result, police and firefighters, who have traditionally supported Democratic city candidates, have deserted the party in considerable numbers. In fact, an ex-firefighter was elected to the City Council four years ago, with Republican backing.

In the last paragraph of the article the authors alluded to the Minneapolis truck drivers' strike of 1934. This brings to mind perhaps the most serious problem: the lack of aggressive, progressive leadership. The 1934 strike, which brought Minneapolis into the mainstream of labor organizing, was led by the Trotskyist Dunne brothers. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it was the progressive, sometimes Socialist or Communist groups that provided the leadership and ideological underpinnings of labor's strength and progress. However, with the Smith Act of 1940 (under which the Dunne brothers were prosecuted), anticommunist oaths in the Taft-Hartley Act and the expulsion of alleged communist and/or progressive unions and leaders, the movement lost its momentum to organize the unorganized and to consolidate and further the gains made under the New Deal. *Kathryn Ann Johnson*

I'LL TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Sunnyside, Wash.

The main point of your editorial "Ferraroblip" [*The Nation*, Sept. 1], as expressed in the final paragraph, is fine, but your comparison of the attacks on Ferraro with the attacks on Jesse Jackson is ludicrous. To compare checking the wrong boxes on a disclosure form or mixing bank accounts to pay school tuition with verbal expressions of racism is an insult. And your statement, "In the same way, it didn't matter much what Jesse Jackson said in his unguarded moments," is outrageous!

Yes, it *does* matter what politicians say in their unguarded moments—when would you expect them to express their true feelings if not then, for heaven's sake?!

Anyone can pretend to believe in ethnic and sexual equality in public appearances, especially a politician or other public figure with much to lose by having his or her bigotry exposed. Do you think that prejudice has an on/off switch so Jackson can play the bigot in private but turn back into a liberal in public?

What kind of ivory tower do you live in that permits you to make such a naïve statement as the one above, or this one: "Jackson proved his sensitivity and integrity beyond his critics' suspicions"? I don't know how you define "his critics." If they are the bigots of America who resent any black man or woman running for President, he certainly hasn't proved anything to them. If they are people like me who support the idea of black candidates and also happen to agree with many of Jackson's ideas, I've got news for you—he hasn't proved himself to me.

The man may or may not have integrity. I suppose, theoretically, a bigot can have integrity. He certainly does not have sensitivity: neither in the canny survival sense of a politician nor the empathetic moral sense of a minister.

I'm not sorry he entered the race. I think he may have done the Democratic Party and black Americans a great service. I'm not sorry Ferraro is running, though I think she and Mondale have almost no chance of winning. But don't compare the two—at least not until you find some flaw in Ferraro as serious as the vein of prejudice in Jackson. And don't pose as the voice of American liberalism and then say that bigotry doesn't matter so long as it's expressed privately.

H. Adielé

PRIME-TIME NUMBERS

Rochester, N.Y.

In an otherwise enlightening article, Pat Aufderheide erred in stating that the F.C.C. requires hearings for *all* broadcast media every seven years ["Free Speech for Broadcasters Only," *The Nation*, Sept. 1]. Television stations must now renew their licenses every five years.

She also failed to mention Senator Robert Packwood's backdoor role in extending the licensing period; for decades it had been three years.

Together with the Reagan Administration's desire for deregulation of radio and television, the longer licensing periods mean that licensees now can offer no public affairs programming, yet still have up to seven years to milk a station's profits before reselling the property.

There is no question that in his self-serving crusade to aid the broadcast industry, Senator Packwood is taking the freedom of speech the Supreme Court says the people possess and handing it to broadcasters to be extinguished.

Mitchell Kaidy
Rochester Committee
For Broadcasting

A TEMPLE OF DOOM AND GLOOM

Seattle

We would like to thank *The Nation* for publishing the only review we have seen of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* that mentions the film's racism and sexism [Andrew Kopkind, "Films," June 9]. However, given the hideous racial imagery that permeates the film, the critique was remarkably mild. After two hours of seeing Indians depicted as stupid, smelly brutes to be blown away to the cheers and applause of a youthful audience, we were so appalled that we felt we had to condemn the film publicly. We scheduled a demonstration in front of the local theater showing the film. Forty to fifty people who were as offended by the film as we were showed up carrying placards which read, for example, "Indians don't stink, Spielberg does" and "Save your money, racism's not funny," and chanting "Spielberg is a racist crook, raider of your pocketbook."

The demonstration received local and national press coverage. *Entertainment Tonight* countered our side of the story with the reaction of a woman leaving the theater. When questioned by reporters about our protest, she responded: "I don't see anything wrong with the film. Maybe people over there live like that." A film that panders to racial hatred and xenophobia and that fosters this kind of confusion and ignorance deserves condemnation far harsher than your reviewer gave it. *Rita Bruun*
Aslam Khan
Muna Vakil

AUTHOR'S QUERY

New York City

For a biography of J. Edgar Hoover, I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has personal recollections, photographs, correspondence or copies of documents from F.B.I. files. *John Stuart Cox*
200 Riverside Drive
New York, N.Y. 10025

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Letters may be edited for reasons of space.

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EDITORIALS.

East Meets West

Moscow's abrupt cancellation of East German leader Erich Honecker's visit to Bonn on September 4 is not, as the press reported, further proof of the intractability of the forty-year-old German reunification problem. The incident is significant for what it reveals about the increasingly independent foreign policies of the two Germanys.

Despite intensified cold war tensions between the superpowers, Bonn has persisted in seeking détente with Moscow and East Berlin. For its part, East Berlin, once regarded as the keeper of the Stalinist flame, has increasingly aligned itself with those Soviet bloc countries that are most outspoken in arguing for greater European autonomy.

Since 1970, Bonn and East Berlin have pursued a policy of *Ostpolitik*, calling for closer relations. In July, West Germany announced that it would provide the German Democratic Republic with $333 million in bank credits; in return, the G.D.R. agreed to lift some restrictions on cross-border visits. A month later, the East German government strongly rebutted a Soviet press attack on its improved relations with West Germany.

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The reason for the growing inter-German détente is not hard to find. As Moscow and Washington play a reckless game of deployment and counterdeployment, they sow the seeds of neutralist sentiments. In East Germany, for example, the number of draftees choosing nonmilitary construction duties or flatly refusing to serve has risen from approximately 700 per year in the 1960s and 1970s to more than 10,000 in 1983. Lutheran and other Protestant clerics have worked against compulsory military service on behalf of conscientious objectors, and unofficial peace groups operate in Dresden, Schwerin, Weimar, Jena and East Berlin.

Although Moscow was able to cancel Honecker's trip, the Russians were compelled to express their displeasure publicly, which implies that private diplomacy had failed. The Russians' blunt words were intended to remind Honecker who is in charge, but in the long run they may breed resentment in East Germany and, as one official in Bonn predicted, "boomerang" against the Soviet Union.

Moscow and Washington could, if they were so disposed, learn an important lesson from the growing rapprochement between the two Germanys: the states once regarded as the linchpins of the Warsaw Pact and NATO are no longer content to serve loyally as missile depots. Given the chance, there is hardly an Eastern European country that would not attempt to make a separate détente with the West. Even Bulgaria, widely regarded as the most compliant Soviet ally, has shown symptoms of unease over the deteriorating East-West relationship. As one Bonn official said, "They want to keep up the dialogue with the West and to get a greater room for maneuver." The superpowers' insistence on monolithic blocs in their respective spheres is as obsolete as the idea of a conventional war in Central Europe.

Private Means

Voluntarism has always been a touchstone of President Reagan's political science. If he could, he would hand over the welfare system to private charities; he would give tax money to parochial schools and academies; he would let women with unwanted pregnancies find abortionists in the back alley of their choice; and he would give conglomerates and monopolies free run of the magic marketplace. Fortunately, some countervailing forces still survive to impede his progress on the domestic front. Such is not the case in Reagan's conduct of foreign affairs, where freelance adventurism and vigilante intervention are doing what Congress and public opinion forbid.

The death of two American "soldiers of fortune" in a helicopter inside Nicaragua brought to light what Central America watchers have known for a long time: the *contra* armies fighting the Nicaraguan government are full of Americans, right-wing Cubans and mercenaries from other Latin countries. They are supplied and financed by sympathetic corporations and foundations in the United States and throughout the hemisphere, at the rate of more than $1 million a month. As for El Salvador, although Congress keeps Reagan from sending all the aid he would like, Washington's client states have volunteered to make up the shortfall. Israel, Taiwan and Guatemala rushed in where America was treading lightly. There, too, an impressive effort is being coordinated by the U.S. Embassy and the military mission in San Salvador to import private money and matériel from stateside donors.

The appeal to volunteer warmaking is made on many levels. The foreign governments, many of which receive massive infusions of U.S. aid themselves, score points with the Reagan Administration for their gifts and at the same time build bridges to opposition groups in the Third World who will reciprocate if they come to power. Individual donors in the United States may believe they are giving to charitable foundations helping Latin refugees, but many must know that their dimes and dollars are marching in the worldwide battle line against revolution. The mercenaries who are raiding and bombing the Nicaraguan countryside on missions for the *contras* seem simply to be war lovers, many of them Vietnam veterans eager to revive the village-burning business that went bankrupt in the early 1970s.

At first, the State Department and the C.I.A. issued the usual highly suspect denials of responsibility for any of the volunteer operations. They had tried to keep a certain distance through the use of fronts, conduits and cash laundries, but last week a department spokesman admitted, "We do not discourage" private aid. That was not entirely candid either. By creating a dangerous atmosphere of vigilante fervor President Reagan has encouraged it. His rhetoric and policies contribute directly to the terror in Central America, and the fact that Americans are contract killers and volunteer arms merchants rather than staff soldiers matters little when the *contra* gunships blaze and covert army units arrive for a peasant massacre.

Temporary help finds great favor with American entrepreneurs. It saves money and avoids the bother of union negotiations, fringe benefits and funeral costs. But foreign policy on the Kelly Girl model is a prescription for social disaster. The United States is poised on the rim of the volcano in Central America, and officially sanctioned vigilantism could push it over the edge.

False Connection

Are the Sandinistas running cocaine from Colombia to Miami? Or was the American press taken in by a White House snow job? It all started in July, when the Moonie-owned *Washington Times* "broke" a story about how Federal officials smashed a Florida-based drug ring that was importing Colombian cocaine through Nicaragua. Less an exposé than a White House leak, the paper's report drew on Drug Enforcement Administration papers scheduled to be filed in a Miami court the following day and on lurid quotes from unidentified sources in the Reagan Administration. The drug-smuggling scheme was masterminded by two of Managua's

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top three leaders, Interior Minister Tomás Borge Martínez and Defense Minister Humberto Ortega Saavedra, the *Times* reporter alleged, citing White House sources. One of them told him that Borge had suspended his bitter power struggle with Ortega for the more urgent pursuit of peddling poison to the heartland of imperialism.

What? The Sandinistas are selling coke? The *Times* story claimed that the D.E.A. had photographs of Nicaraguans loading the drugs on a U.S.-bound airplane. The D.E.A. had named one man, Frederico Vaughan, identified only as an aid to the Interior Minister; the reporter promoted him to "Borge's right-hand man." Within days the story made the front pages of Bogotá's leading dailies, *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*. The latter published a fine-print translation of the court papers, which named Pablo Escobar Gaviria, reputed to be one of Colombia's biggest cocaine mafiosi, now living in exile in Panama, as the supplier. Escobar's alleged involvement guaranteed maximum coverage of the story in Colombia, where the drug trade is something of a national obsession.

Meanwhile, back in the States, indictments were handed down, and the White House floated a series of unattributed statements charging a Colombian-Sandinista drug conspiracy. Washington reporters reacted quickly. The *CBS Evening News* squeezed in a spot showing the suspects being "walked" past the Miami courthouse. *The New York Times* played a balancing act, reporting both the somewhat tame contents of the D.E.A. affidavits and the more colorful quotations of unnamed White House sources. The *Los Angeles Times* topped everyone by reporting that its "unidentified Administration sources" had incriminating pictures not of Borge's right-hand man but of the Interior Minister himself. These revelations, the *L.A. Times* concluded, could spell repeal of the House vote to cut off military aid to the *contras*.

Curiously, after four days of charges and countercharges—the Nicaraguans said it was another attempt to undermine their revolution—not one reporter had seen the famous pictures. Granted, releasing the story during the week of the Democratic Convention (when many Washington reporters were in San Francisco) diminished the likelihood of skeptical reporters discrediting it, but the position of the news media on the story was positively supine.

The closest anyone came to challenging the White House story was in an exposé by Brian Ross of *NBC Nightly News*. Filing from Miami on July 20, Ross, the network's expert on narcotics smuggling, vented his indignation at the Administration not for trying to smear the Sandinistas but for letting "what appeared to be a promising cocaine-smuggling investigation" get "blown" for the sake of a week's worth of "propaganda."

Ross's piece never established just what was so promising about the investigation the Administration had blown. He showed file pictures of Borge and Ortega in Managua, videotape of the D.E.A.'s bust of three Colombian suspects in Florida and his own footage of the so-called spy-plane the C.I.A. says it flew down to take pictures of the guilty Sandinistas. Television is a visual medium. Where were the pictures the C.I.A. took? "They refused to show them to me," Ross told me.

What they did show him was the camera the agency said it used to photograph the Nicaraguans. That is a little like the Justice Department showing a reporter the equipment used to get the goods on John DeLorean instead of playing the videotape. Didn't the agency's behavior make Ross a little suspicious? "Well," the reporter admitted, "anything that comes from the C.I.A. you start out being skeptical about it. But then it came from people we've dealt with for a long time. I mean, they are not interested in Communists or anti-Communists; they just have a narrow focus of stopping drugs. And that's all they care about." Oh.

During the next two weeks the White House orchestrated the release of more evidence linking Colombian drugs to Nicaraguan commandants. A Sandinista "defector" testified before Florida Republican Paula Hawkins's Senate Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (renamed "Drugs and Terrorism" for these sessions). After appearing on the *Today Show* in the morning, the defector, Antonio Farach, told Hawkins's panel he didn't know anything about Sandinistas shipping drugs, but friends of his, whom he refused to identify, did.

While those inconsistencies were apparently lost on American journalists, they did not escape the attention of *El Espectador* columnist Edgar Caldas Vera, who demanded "*la gran prueba*" (the big proof)—the incriminating photographs that showed Pablo Escobar supervising the loading of cocaine on the Nicaraguans' plane. He expressed skepticism that Escobar, "one of the richest men in the world," would have been present. The idea was "*risible*" (preposterous). He suggested that if the D.E.A. had any pictures, they were "*montaje*" (faked) and noted that "historically the most serious charges are raised against countries and leaders opposed to the United States."

A week later, on August 5, Hawkins released the famous secret photographs. Of Borge? Of Ortega? No, the pictures she released were of Pablo Escobar and some alleged Nicaraguans, otherwise unidentified.

While the response from the U.S. press was swift and predictable (both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* ran Hawkins's photographs in their A sections), down in Colombia Edgar Caldas was unimpressed. Pictures of Escobar hardly supported the Administration's earlier claims, he wrote. Of course, Caldas may have been catering to his readers' wounded national pride, but let it be noted that it took a Bogotá journalist to ask, Where's the proof?

JOEL MILLMAN

Joel Millman is a freelance writer and television producer in New York City, who has worked in Central America.

NEXT WEEK
SPECIAL ISSUE:
Fifteen Years of the Burger Court

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In its exchanges and contacts with the Old World, the United States was selective rather than exclusive. It did not import the social relations of feudalism from Europe, though it did import and preserve for a time the system of slavery. It kept out monarchy without quite excluding aristocracy. And from absolutism it learned to revere, if not consistently, the separation of powers. The big mistake was to import the "historic ideology" of feudalism, slavery and monarchy in the form of Christianity. The current ridiculous argument over religion in politics is the result—an argument the left is in danger of losing.

Considering that every bill and coin in circulation bears the absurd claim "In God We Trust," and considering that the pledge of allegiance wrongly describes the United States as "one nation under God," and recalling that Congress opens every day's work with a little prayer, it is hard enough to make the case that religion and politics in this country are separate. It is hard even to make the case that church and state are separate. After all, there's God, right on the money. In what sense, then, are the President and his clerical allies being inconsistent or un-American in stressing religious values as essential to their own political crusade?

Why not begin, like the Gospels, at the beginning. Either you believe that human beings are the product of a protracted evolutionary combat, or you believe that we were created by God with a presumable purpose. If you believe the latter, it would be extraordinary if you could keep God out of your politics. Christianity, Islam and Judaism all affirm a creator, jealous and mysterious but benevolent. The adherents of these beliefs would be insulting themselves and their god, and the intelligence of their rivals, if they were to pretend that such a thing were a private matter. It's not a question, to use the current cant, of imposing your beliefs on others. It's a question of taking your beliefs seriously.

Large sections of the left and liberal world in the United States are tying themselves into unattractive knots because they grant the first premise of the religions and then refuse their logic. People keep telling me that I should support some Catholic missionary effort in El Salvador, some "interfaith" civil rights outfit in the South or some "progressive rabbi" on the West Bank. I believe I'm quite capable of supporting justice in Central America, civil rights at home, trade unions in Poland, peace in the Middle East and a number of other causes whether a church agrees with these propositions or whether, which is more commonly the case, it does not. Why should the Maryknoll order be allowed to claim it is "witnessing" in politics, and not Moonies or the Moral Majority or the Mormons?

The same applies to the so-called liberation theology movement, which seems to believe that politics and religion are one and the same thing, and seems able to garner great sympathy on the left for this sinister idea. Now, to be a Roman Catholic is no small thing. It involves you in believing, at the risk of your immortal soul, in the Apostolic succession. The belief in the Apostolic succession is quite a belief. It means that the Pope is the direct descendant of St. Peter and holds the keys of heaven and hell by a direct, divine franchise. It also means that he is infallible when speaking ex cathedra on matters of doctrine. This means that if he says liberation theology is wrong, it is wrong. If you don't believe that, then you are not a Catholic, and your argument collapses in a welter of illogic which is ugly to see and boring to listen to.

In most developed countries, the left and the workers' movement begin by affirming that they are not religious. They don't expect bishops and clergymen to stay out of politics because they already know that the church is part of the material reality of the ruling order. How different it is in the United States. Here, the left is either actually religious or secular in a semi-apologetic way. If Archbishop John J. O'Connor believes abortion is murder, how can he be expected to be quiet about it? How is he expected to view it as a matter of purely individual concern? Since when did *Commonweal* or the Berrigan brothers proclaim that their Catholicism was an internal affair rather than the rationale of their politics? Those who don't see the obviousness of this point will end up like Geraldine Ferraro, who seems only to have the cowardice of her convictions and who says, in effect, that her views on the immortal soul of the unborn are no concern to anyone but herself, except when she votes for abortion. Those on the right do not make this mistake. They say religious principles do matter and thus cannot be abstracted from everyday life. Both of those propositions may be true, or neither. You can't have it both ways. As it is, all the mileage is going to the conservatives, who mean what they say and who are busy constructing a society where the state cares for you before you are born and after you are dead but doesn't give a shit for you in between.

Which is as it should be. "My kingdom is not of this world," even if My adherents claim all the tax exemptions that they dare—and then some. Religion, in some form, is necessary to temporal ruling elites, so that they can convince themselves that they rule in the interest of all. It is *not* necessary to movements of reason, enlightenment and reform, which must first convince people that they have only one life and that it must not be stolen from them. The case to be made here is the one that inverts Genesis and affirms that man created God in his own image—and made quite a good job of it. This may seem unfeeling but it is in fact more humane as well as more truthful. Our indictment of the religious right is not that it is heartless—a tautology in any case—but that it is brainless.

Mondale evidently thinks he can duck this argument by going to church a lot and by mentioning ad nauseam that his ancestors were men of the cloth. When Mario Cuomo boasts that his soul matters more to him than his body, who am I to disagree? What is needed is not a thin and permeable wall between church and state but a realization on the left that in any argument involving blind faith, it is the right that has the whip hand. We need instead a wall of separation between radical ideas and superstitions, which however well-intentioned, belong in the realm of illusion.

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

As the American and Soviet political systems go through a prolonged process of leadership succession, each country's media is trying to explain how the other system chooses a top leader and the significance of the outcome. On balance, the Soviet media is doing a better job.

Consider the contradictory conclusions that have typified American coverage of the Soviet leadership succession since it began with Leonid Brezhnev's death, in November 1982. Most newspaper and television reports confidently predicted that Konstantin Chernenko would be the new leader, reasoning that he had been groomed by Brezhnev as heir to the "all-powerful" Communist Party apparatus. No meaningful changes were expected in Soviet policy.

When the victor turned out to be Yuri Andropov, longtime head of the K.G.B., the American media embraced the opposite interpretation: Andropov had been chosen by a "powerful" K.G.B.-military alliance in revolt against the policy immobility of a corrupt and enfeebled Brezhnev-Chernenko party apparatus. Opinion varied as to whether the K.G.B. or the military was the more muscular partner in the takeover, but commentators agreed that Andropov had quickly solidified power and become a "strongman" leader who would take decisive steps at home and abroad.

Andropov's strongman image—alternately, faintly liberal and thuggish—prevailed right up to his death, in February, despite clear signs that he was gravely ill as early as the fall of 1983. Common sense should have suggested that power was flowing from a stricken leader's hands, as would be expected in other political systems. But on the assumption that a Soviet leader must be a virtual dictator, the American media continued to interpret each political development as evidence of Andropov's ever-growing power. Such reports read like a *Saturday Night Live* skit, as in a *New York Times* headline of December 30, 1983: "Andropov's Situation: Ailing, but Politically Stronger."

The aged Chernenko's emergence as Andropov's successor, therefore, also surprised American journalists. Most had favored "strongman" candidates, including some who lacked essential qualifications. Undaunted, the media has found yet another explanation for all that has happened, and not happened, since February. The Soviet Union, it is now widely reported, has no leader. Chernenko is said to be "weak" or a figurehead, with real power suddenly dispersed among various institutional bosses, such as Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

The media thus contradicts, without explanation or self-criticism, those analyses it presented with equal certainty only months ago. Where is the kingmaking K.G.B., the demand by military and other bosses for strong central leadership, the impotence of Chernenko's party apparatus? Indeed, how did Chernenko become both General Secretary and President in only two months, when it took Andropov seven? Apparently, journalists are simply parroting the Reagan Administration's election-year claim that the absence of a "real" Soviet leader, not its own bellicose policies, is responsible for the total breakdown in arms negotiations.

No one can blame the American media for failing to predict Andropov's victory or Chernenko's. Soviet succession politics is secretive; even professional Sovietologists did little better. But one can fault the media for fixating on rumors instead of presenting informed and coherent perspectives on the Soviet leadership system, which are readily available in Western scholarly literature. There, journalists could learn, for example, that no Soviet leader has ever managed to pick his successor; that every leader since Lenin has needed at least five years to consolidate authority; and that the power of each party leader since Stalin has shrunk progressively due to the growing role of other institutions and oligarchs, and to longstanding conflicts among them.

In comparison, Soviet media coverage of the American Presidential campaign seems well-informed and even sophisticated. To be fair, Soviet journalists have important advantages over their American counterparts. Many are trained experts on the United States and are thus more knowledgeable about their subject. And because our succession process is open, they have far greater access to information. On the other hand, they suffer the disadvantage of press censorship, which requires that they at least pay lip service to official stereotypes, including remnants of the lapsed Stalinist dogma that American elections are meaningless charades between two "monopoly capitalist" puppets who "serve one master."

Nonetheless, Soviet citizens can easily discern from their media that the 1984 election campaign is a popular democratic process of real political significance. The Soviet press has reported in considerable detail the long Democratic primaries, the importance of mass blocs of voters and the heated debate on issues from nuclear weapons to school prayer and abortion. Indeed, commentators often simply echo prevailing trends in the American press, as when they interpret polls, explain a "Teflon President," admire Mario Cuomo's speech to the Democratic Convention and chide Walter Mondale's positions as "devoid of eccentricity."

In contrast to our media's Kremlinology, Soviet analysis also seems refreshingly problematic. Having long insisted that President Reagan's cold war policies are both responsible for "dangerous" East-West relations and unpopular with "the American people," commentators offer no single or simplistic explanation for his probable re-election in November. Some blame the Democrats for failing to offer a "well-defined alternative." Others emphasize the Teflon factor or the "temporary" economic upturn. A few even violate an official taboo by suggesting that "average Americans" are deeply anti-Soviet.

Clearly, Soviet journalists have learned more about our politics than American journalists have learned about Soviet politics. Another reason may be that they have longer memories and thus are more self-critical. A Moscow television pundit recently warned viewers, "We all thought that Carter would be better than Ford, and Reagan better than Carter. . . . We were mistaken."

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CALVIN TRILLIN

Now that I've established myself as an authority on foreign relations, you'll want to know if there is any significant difference between French people and Americans. Yes, I'm afraid there is. The difference is this: French people carry around dogs. That's right. I was over there in the spring, and I saw it with my own eyes. But even so, you may ask, aren't all of us—all people everywhere, regardless of nationality or race or sexual proclivity—brothers under the skin? No, not really. Sorry, but no. You can be a brother under the skin with someone who walks down the street with a doggie tucked under his arm like a loaf of sourdough rye if you want to. As for me, no thanks.

I believe most Americans would share my view. Americans don't carry dogs. I'd be the first to admit that they have their faults, but they don't carry dogs. Sure, an American may pick up a dog that has hurt its foot and carry it off to the vet. That's not the sort of dog-carrying I'm talking about. I'm talking about an otherwise respectable-looking Frenchman strolling down the street with a poodle in the crook of his arm, holding the poodle while having a drink at an outdoor cafe, shifting the poodle to the other arm when the check comes in order to get to his wallet and then continuing down the street carrying the poodle. That is what I would call carrying around a dog. A poodle is about as big a dog as I saw carried that way, but for all I know French people also lug around Dalmations or Irish wolfhounds. It may be that if they intend to carry around an extremely large dog they get a friend to hold up one end. I don't know. Even an authority can't be expected to know everything. Whatever the size of the dog, you can imagine what happens if a canine-carrying Frenchman runs across an American tourist on the street: one of those confrontations that make foreign relations so messy. The American is likely to say, "Hey, guy, there somethin' the matter with your dog, or what?"

I worry a lot about these differences. I live in Canada in the summer—that is how I became an authority on foreign relations—and I worry a lot about the fact that Canadians use $2 bills. The United States quit using $2 bills a long time ago because everyone thought they were bad luck. How can we foster international understanding between Canadians and Americans when Canadians think nothing of paying for a pack of cigarettes with a bill that any American knows would cause him to lose the New York State Lottery in perpetuity? A lot of Canadians must think that Americans are silly for being afraid of a $2 bill. Even worse, a lot of Canadians must worry about the possibility that the $2 bill is, in fact, unlucky. If not, they must wonder, Why is it that Canadians, who are widely considered to be much nicer than Americans, have a $2 bill that is worth only US $1.54?

What was that? Do French-Canadians carry around dogs? I'm surprised by the question. Surprised and a little disappointed. It's just the sort of question that makes foreign relations so difficult. Of course French-Canadians don't carry dogs. They don't even know that French people carry dogs. If they did, they might have all sorts of anxieties about whether they are wise to go on all the time about the importance of speaking French. So don't tell them.

In France, I would come home from the market—we had rented a house near a town called Saint-Rémy—and say to my wife, "I saw a man today with a briefcase in one hand and a fox terrier in the other. What hope can there be for the Atlantic alliance?"

"But how about the English?" my wife said, after one of those outbursts. "Aren't the English a lot like we are?"

"The English!" I said. "The English don't have mosquitoes! How can they understand the hopes and fears—mainly the fears—of Americans if they've never tried to fall asleep on a summer night when the buzzing starts?"

"But they went through the war," my wife said. "The blitz and all. And those Graham Greene Englishmen in tropical colonies who had malaria. Surely they must have——"

"The war is over," I said. "The empire is gone. All that's over now." Authorities learn never to get mired in the past. What I saw for the future was not pleasant: the NATO delegates are trying to meet, but the room is poisoned by suspicion and misunderstanding. The Canadian is wondering whether the British ambassador would sound quite so self-satisfied if he ever came face to face with the sort of Manitoba mosquito that is big enough to carry off a half-grown calf. The French ambassador is worried about the possibility that Canadian bad luck is trans-Atlantically contagious. He starts to speak, but he's interrupted by the American who is commanding general of all NATO troops. "Your pooch break a leg?" the general asks. "Or what?"

Trying to soothe me with talk of small domestic details, my wife reminded me that I had to prepare the trash to take out early the next morning; she had learned that Tuesday is trash day in Saint-Rémy. "Odd," I said, "that's the same day I take out the trash in Canada. Also in New York." Then it hit me: International Trash Collection Day. Maybe we could all be brothers under the skin after all, thinking of each other as we hauled those big green plastic bags out to the curb. I was buoyed by that thought during the summer in Canada—until we were visited by a friend named Chester, who informed us that in New Haven, Connecticut, the trash is collected on Wednesday. I abandoned the notion of International Trash Collection Day without hesitation. An authority has to be ruthless about discarding unworkable theories.

Still, now and then I think back on those Canadian Tuesdays when I still thought that I.T.C.D. was what we authorities call a viable option. As I'd load my green plastic bags into a wheelbarrow, I would know that somewhere in England a cheerful Englishman—cheerful because he has just had a good night's sleep even without screens—was rolling his dustbin to the curb. Some New Yorker was cursing the sanitation men for having left a mess in front of his stoop. In France, a man was walking to the curb—a large green plastic bag in one arm, a nice little dog in the other.

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ARTICLES.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION II

If You Think It Can't Happen Here, Think Again

MICHAEL WALDMAN

While President Reagan and Congress squabble publicly over the proposed balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution, supporters of the amendment are nearing success in a quiet campaign which is potentially far more dangerous than the amendment itself. Thirty-two states have issued calls for a constitutional convention to draft a balanced-budget amendment; according to Article V of the Constitution, a convention must be held when two-thirds of the states—a total of thirty-four—call for it. It would be the first such gathering since the Founding Fathers' in 1787.

We may be sleepwalking into a constitutional crisis. A proposition calling for a convention will be on the ballot in Montana on November 6. It stands a 50 percent chance of passing, according to Linda Rogers-Kingsbury, executive director of Citizens to Protect the Constitution. The call passed the Michigan State Senate in April and the State House may vote on it later this month in the midst of a statewide tax revolt. And although a convention proposition was thrown off the California ballot by the State Supreme Court (a decision upheld by Justice William Rehnquist on September 7), proponents there will have little difficulty collecting enough signatures to put it on the ballet in the spring. If it does appear, it is likely to pass.

Regardless of what happens in those three states, fighting the convention or limiting its damage may dominate the liberal agenda for several years. As Fred Wertheimer, president of Common Cause, says, "This has the capacity to go in two days from a non-issue to the most important issue. Every major problem in this country would be shoved to the side. It would not only be a constitutional crisis, it would be a governing crisis such as we've never experienced."

The prospect raises dozens of questions. Who convenes the convention? The Constitution doesn't say. How are delegates chosen—by appointment or by election? How is its product ratified—by legislatures, state conventions or the voters? What would Congress's instructions be? "There are no guidelines, no court cases," says Representative Charles E. Schumer, a member of the House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights. "The only precedent is *The Federalist Papers* and a bunch of law review articles." Most ominous is the possibility of a runaway convention that moves beyond the issue of a balanced budget to other items on the right's wish list.

Ten years ago the National Taxpayers Union (N.T.U.) began a campaign to persuade Congress to pass a balanced-budget amendment. The Congressional route is the way by which all the amendments to the Constitution were enacted. Realizing that Congress would not readily pass the measure, the N.T.U. took the only other route outlined in Article V, urging states to pass calls for a constitutional convention—hoping to intimidate Congress into action. The drive achieved prominence in 1979, when twenty-eight states had voted for a convention and it had won the support of California Governor Jerry Brown, then a candidate for President. After the call for a constitutional convention had passed in several states with no hearings and little debate, a liberal coalition organized by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and Vice President Walter Mondale defeated propositions in Massachusetts and Vermont, and the issue faded from public view.

Meanwhile, convention proponents steadily piled up state endorsements. The N.T.U. forces won the support of three more legislatures, in Nevada, Alaska and, most recently, Missouri. The convention call has been enthusiastically endorsed by the National Conservative Public Action Committee, the National Right to Work Committee and other New Right groups. Although last year Treasury Secretary Donald Regan warned that the convention "would certainly cause a lot of confusion," the 1984 Republican platform supports it.

Budget amendment advocates who had previously said they didn't want a convention are looking forward to one after all. N.T.U. president James Dale Davidson told the *Los Angeles Times*: "I think we can get a stronger amendment from the convention than from the Congress. A convention would be a fantastic national civics lesson, more exciting than 'Brideshead Revisited.'" Davidson supports provisions instituting a national referendum on the deficit, perhaps authorizing a return to the gold standard and giving the President the power to veto line items in the budget.

In contrast to the focused and well-funded N.T.U. effort, labor, civil liberties, business, religious and civic groups opposed to the idea have come together in a loose association known as Citizens to Protect the Constitution. The coalition's membership ranges from the A.F.L.-C.I.O. to the Business Roundtable, and its board of advisers includes Melvin Laird, Felix Rohatyn, Lane Kirkland and the Rev. Theodore Hesburgh. By emphasizing the chaos a convention could cause, the coalition has defeated calls in five states since last October. It has also mounted a campaign to persuade states to repeal their convention calls. Last year in Maryland, one of the first states to call for a convention, the House of Delegates voted by a 2-to-1 margin to withdraw its petition, and liberals in the State Senate are fighting for repeal against a conservative filibuster. But states where

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repeal is a possibility must act before the thirty-four-state threshold is reached.

The California Supreme Court's August 26 decision, which removed the proposition from the ballot in response to a lawsuit filed by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and other petitioners, including the National Organization for Women and the American Civil Liberties Union, may have postponed the deadline a bit. Before the decision, N.T.U. and other supporters expected to spend up to $5 million in California to sponsor a grass-roots network of conservative activists and a direct-mail deluge. Their campaign, which is undaunted by the setback, relies on the groups formed in the battle for Proposition 13—most prominently, the National Tax Limitation Committee, led by Lewis Uhler, a former member of the John Birch Society and cabinet official under Governor Reagan—and has enlisted U.S. Senator Pete Wilson as honorary chairman.

The California opposition is not so well funded, relying on constituency groups whose resources have been depleted by action on other ballot initiatives and by support for the Mondale campaign. Ironically, the liberal coalition has relied on an alliance of established organizations in the face of a populist assault from the right. Says Representative Don Edwards, chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, convention foes "don't have passion; they don't write letters and cards." Convention foes will have to learn to mobilize citizens effectively if the contest escalates in the next few years.

If thirty-four state petitions are received, Congress will be forced to supervise the next stage of the process. Democratic staff on Edwards's subcommittee have already begun poring over the state petitions to see if they are valid. Some date from before 1977, which places them outside Congress's traditional (but not statutory) seven-year limit for the ratification of a constitutional amendment. Others were not immediately forwarded to Congress, as required by the Constitution. And the language of the calls differs from state to state. House Democrats have not tried to resolve those problems; they want to avoid encouraging more states to issue calls. In the Senate, however, the Judiciary Committee has approved legislation, introduced by Orrin Hatch; that acknowledges the seven-year limit but recognizes all petitions from the previous twelve years. (In a vivid example of the pork-barreling that has propelled the convention this far, Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee and a convention foe, nevertheless agreed in committee to support a twelve-year limit, because a seven-year limit would have disqualified Delaware's petition.)

The Hatch legislation tries to formalize Congress's role. It includes specific instructions that the convention confine itself to producing a balanced-budget amendment. Before routing the amendment to the states for ratification, Congress would review the convention's work to insure that its instructions had been followed. But no one knows whether the convention would be answerable to Congress.

Supporters argue that the convention could be limited to a single topic. That view is challenged by opponents, who cite the language of Article V: "Congress shall call a convention for proposing amendments." According to Stanford Law School professor Gerald Gunther, "Once a convention is called it is an autonomous body, and it can discuss anything it damn well pleases if it has popular support."

Pressure groups and issue advocates would be attracted to a convention like metal filings to a magnet. Citizens lobbying Congress for amendments on issues from equal rights and gun control to right to life and right to work would surely seize the chance to accomplish in one stroke what years of effort had failed to achieve. Public fear of a New Right takeover has prompted N.T.U. vice president David Keating to issue a telegram and solicit signatures from Richard Viguerie, Terry Dolan, Howard Phillips and other conservatives denying as "utterly false" rumors that they intend to use the convention to push for anything other than a balanced-budget amendment. Yet that amendment could be encumbered with a variety of other proposals—for example, stipulations that Federal funds not be used for busing or abortion.

Proponents assert that the courts and state legislators would halt a convention that got out of hand. But the courts might well rule that this is a "political thicket" they cannot untangle, as the Supreme Court decided in the "one person, one vote" cases of the 1960s. As for relying on the state legislators, many of whom issued the call in the first place, Rogers-Kingsbury notes: "State legislators are going to run

A BALANCED-BUDGET AMENDMENT?

If a constitutional convention is so bad, should Congress pass the balanced-budget amendment as a lesser evil? No—because the amendment would prove as misguided as Prohibition.

Depending on how it was written, the amendment would either be toothless or a straitjacket. If it were constructed loosely, Congress could evade its limits with a capital budget for public improvements and with off-budget spending and loans. As Roy Ash, director of the Office of Management and Budget under Presidents Nixon and Ford, testified in Senate hearings on the amendment, "The country's fiscal affairs will be driven underground." On the other hand, if it were enforced, it would render impossible pump-priming of the sort that has fueled the recovery. A study by Data Resources conducted for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees estimated that if the balanced-budget amendment were put into effect in 1987, the economy would suffer a recession, with unemployment rising to 11.2 percent by 1989.

Every year's budget would be the subject of a lawsuit, and would undoubtedly wind up in the Supreme Court. (So much for the right wing's opposition to "judicial activism.") On this issue it is worth quoting Robert Bork, a leading conservative judge, who asks "whether we want the economic policy of the United States to be what the judges say it is." M.W.

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for delegate to be the next Founding Fathers. They petition Congress, they run for it and then they go back to get it passed. It's going to be just a little bit incestuous."

An ominous precedent is provided by the Constitutional Convention of 1787, itself a runaway. Specifically instructed by the Continental Congress to amend the Articles of Confederation, the convention charged ahead and drafted an entirely new document. At the end of the process, James Madison issued a warning about future conventions that resonates two centuries later:

> An election into it would be courted by the most violent partisans on both sides . . .[and] would no doubt contain individuals of insidious views, who under the mask of seeking alterations popular in some parts but inadmissible in other parts of the Union might have a dangerous opportunity of sapping the very foundation of the fabric. . . . Having witnessed the difficulties and dangers experienced by the first convention which assembled under every propitious circumstance, I would tremble for the result of a second. □

MOZAMBIQUE–SOUTH AFRICA PACT

Delicate Peace With Apartheid

CLAUDE ROBINSON

On March 16, in the town of Nkomati, on the border between Mozambique and South Africa, representatives of the two countries' governments signed an accord aimed at reducing tensions between them. In addition to promoting mutual security and cooperation on several economic projects, the agreement calls for Mozambique to withdraw its support from the guerrillas of the African National Congress (A.N.C.) and for South Africa to stop directing and supplying rebels seeking the overthrow of Mozambique's government.

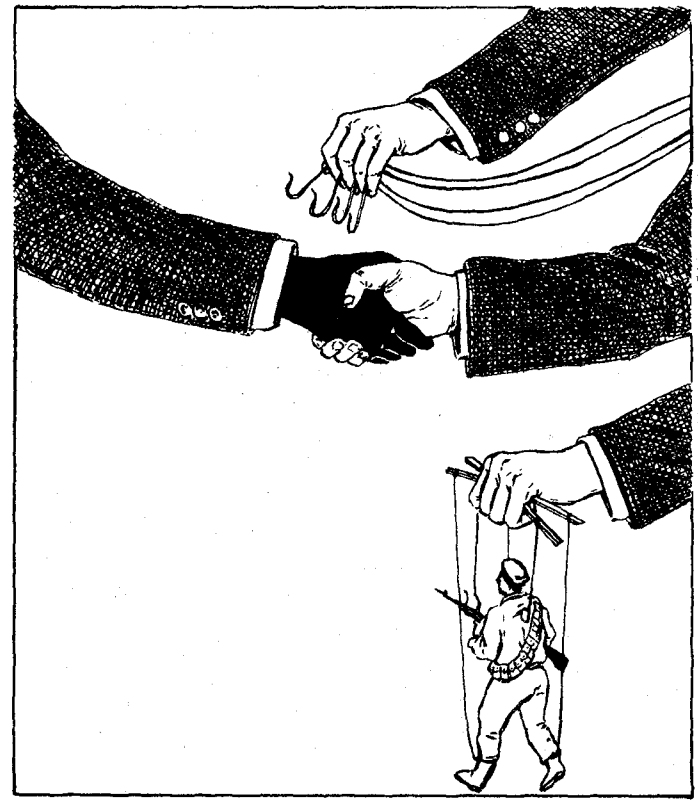
Why did Mozambican President Samora Machel, a socialist and revolutionary with impeccable antiapartheid credentials, enter into this pact with Prime Minister P.W. Botha? Explaining the accord to the Permanent Commission of the People's Assembly in the capital city of Maputo on April 5, Machel emphasized the need for détente between countries with different social systems, while reaffirming his government's commitment to "building socialism on the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism." He warned that "rightist opportunists" would try to give a "defeatist content" to the implementation of the agreement and that "leftist opportunists" would use "adventurist ideas and pseudorevolutionary arguments to divide the progressive forces and spread confusion and intrigue."

Machel's success in steering between this political Scylla and Charybdis will depend in part on his government's ability to defeat the rebels whom Mozambicans call the "armed bandits." Created by Rhodesian intelligence in the late 1970s to harass Machel's Frelimo government for its support of the Zimbabwe rebels, the Mozambique National Resistance (M.N.R.) has been armed, financed and controlled by South Africa. As of March, it operated in nine of Mozambique's ten provinces. Even if South Africa keeps its side of the Nkomati bargain it will take time for the ill-equipped Mozambican troops to regain control of the often inaccessible hinterland.

There were widespread reports in Mozambique that South Africa had sent thousands of heavily armed M.N.R. rebels into the country just before the Nkomati agreement was signed and dropped equipment to them from helicopters. As President Machel put it at a huge political rally, when the tap was turned off "there was already a lot of water in the pipeline." In the months immediately following the accord, the M.N.R. increased its activity, partly to give the impression that it is independent of South Africa.

The rebels have caused considerable damage in Mozambique, but their most crippling blows have been dealt against food shipments to the famine-ridden country. They have cut road and rail lines from Maputo to outlying regions. In Vilanculos, a small town on the Indian Ocean about halfway between the major ports of Maputo and Beira, U.N. officials delivered maize and dried fish on small landing crafts while I was there in late March. Canoes brought the supplies to villages farther along the coast. The M.N.R. had made it impossible to send food by road or rail from Maputo.

Mozambique is not the only country in southern and eastern Africa that has been hit hard by the droughts that lasted from 1980 through 1982, but many Mozambicans



DRAWINGS BY KIMBERLY BULCKEN ROOT

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believe much of the famine in their country is political rather than natural in origin. Although in 1983 Mozambique alerted the world to its crisis, the Rome-based World Food Program (W.F.P.) confined aid to Maputo province, ignoring the more devastated Inhambane and Gaza provinces, where the M.N.R. was active. Until last October, when President Machel traveled to Western Europe to plead for help, Western countries had viewed the M.N.R. destabilization as purely an internal problem. Machel's requests were interpreted as a sign that he was turning away from the Soviet Union and was therefore worthy of assistance. Aid began to pour in.

Even so, Mozambique has not been getting all the food it needs. Of the 550,000 tons of cereals the country would require in 1983 and 1984, only 338,000 tons had been pledged by the end of March, according to U.N. officials, and an even smaller amount had been delivered. They estimate that Mozambique will need an additional 28,000 tons of food a month until the middle of next year, as well as help in the form of fishhooks, seeds and money to pay for new railway tracks and irrigation systems. No one is sure how many Mozambicans have become sick or gone hungry as a result of the drought and the M.N.R.'s destabilization efforts, but a joint task force established by two U.N. agencies—the W.F.P. and the Food and Agriculture Organization—estimates that more than 4.5 million of the country's 13 million people have been affected, 1.4 million of them seriously. And neighboring Zimbabwe says that some 60,000 Mozambicans have fled across its border and are being cared for in refugee camps established by the government and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

But even if the famine is ended, troubling questions will remain for Mozambique. What social and political price will it have to pay for peace and a chance to reconstruct its economy? A critical factor will be Mozambique's ability to renegotiate its foreign debt—estimated to be $2.5 billion owed to Western banks and to commercial suppliers in Brazil and Europe—without bringing down the heavy-handed intervention of the International Monetary Fund. Another is the pressure South Africa may exert in return for the investments it is already making in shipping and hotels. According to C.W. Fiddian-Green, chairman and chief executive officer of Rennies Shipping Company of South Africa, about 1 million tons of South African goods will move through the port of Maputo before the year's end. Under the Portuguese, Maputo was a favorite vacation spot for South Africans; now the city's virtually empty hotels are being refurbished in anticipation of an influx of tourists. Some Mozambicans fear that Machel will not be able to control the "rightist opportunists" who yearn for the good old days under the Portuguese.

In March Mozambique began keeping its side of the Nkomati bargain by raiding the Maputo homes of members of the African National Congress of South Africa, driving some of them into Swaziland, where many are rounded up and turned over to South Africa. Mozambique never provided bases for the A.N.C., whose military wing, Spear of the Nation, numbers 8,000 to 10,000 trained soldiers, but it transported fighters trained in Tanzania and offered sanctuary to A.N.C. guerrillas following their attacks inside South Africa. The Nkomati accord will change the nature of the A.N.C.'s struggle against apartheid, forcing it to operate inside South Africa rather than from neighboring countries. But as one A.N.C. official in Lusaka, Zambia, put it, "When we were outlawed in the sixties [then South African Prime Minister John] Vorster boasted that we were finished. We were not, and we are not finished now, either."

Many of Mozambique's friends sympathize with the circumstances that forced it into the Nkomati agreement. Their concern is that "leftist opportunists" may denounce Machel and drive him deeper into the arms of South Africa. Indeed, the United States should help Mozambique free itself from the "unwanted embrace," as a U.N. ambassador from East Africa told me recently. □

STEELWORKERS IN CICERO

How to Strike A Conglomerate

DAVID BENSMAN

When the Ogden Corporation virtually forced employees at the Danly Machine Corporation, its subsidiary in the Chicago suburb of Cicero, to strike on May 1, it appeared that the labor movement was in for a shellacking comparable to those it had received in the Patco, Greyhound and Phelps Dodge strikes. But the United Steelworkers of America, which represents the workers at the plant, has fought back with such determination that Ogden executives at the conglomerate's headquarters in New York City must be wondering what they got themselves into. With the aid of the Kamber Group, a Washington-based public relations firm with close ties to the A.F.L.-C.I.O., the union has launched a "corporate campaign" aimed at the company's subsidiaries, its directors and its ties with customers and financial backers. "Now it's a battle to the death," says Ed Sadlowski, the onetime dissident leader within the union, who heads the International's campaign against Ogden.

The situation couldn't have looked bleaker for Local 15271 when its contract with Danly expired. Throughout the negotiations, the parent company's extreme demands for a wage freeze, a two-tier wage structure and a curtailment of seniority and transfer rights made it clear that management did not want to reach a settlement. If that wasn't enough, Ogden's veiled references to its successful decertification of the union local at its air-conditioning equipment subsidiary

David Bensman, associate professor of labor studies at Rutgers University, is writing a book with Roberta Lynch about the decline of the steel industry in Chicago, to be published by McGraw-Hill.

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in Yuba, Oklahoma, removed all doubts about the corporation's intentions.

Further evidence was provided by the sophisticated strikebreaking campaign conducted by Ogden's hired hands, the unionbusting law firm of Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather and Geraldson, and the right-wing public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton. Employees were bombarded with propaganda telling them that Danly has to cut labor costs if it is to survive increased international competition, and that the company's proposed employee involvement program would boost productivity and earnings.

The union's situation was made more difficult by the five-year slump in the machine-tool industry, which had kept hundreds of workers unemployed for prolonged periods. By the time Local 15271 called the strike, 300 of the 1,300 Danly employees who were working in 1979 had been laid off for more than two years; they had lost their right to be recalled and thus had been dropped from the union rolls. Hundreds more who had been laid off for a shorter period of time had little chance of ever getting their jobs back if they joined the strike, especially since Danly promised permanent jobs to those who were willing to cross the picket line.

Predictably, there have been defections from the union ranks. Each morning as strikers picket the gates at the old and sprawling Danly plant on South Laramie Street in the heart of Cicero, they confront friends and neighbors who have decided that scabbing is the only way to survive. There's much bitterness and cursing, and some violence. Chicago policemen—many of them black—have moonlighted as security guards, showing their guns and occasionally shouting racial epithets like "honkie" at the strikers.

The strike has spilled into the streets of Cicero and the neighborhoods of Chicago's nearby South Side, where union members distribute leaflets listing the names of local residents who have gone back to work.

To counter defections, Sadlowski and Local 15271 president Joe Romano asked the steelworkers' newly elected president, Lynn Williams, to send in reinforcements. Since July, Susan Kellock and Robert Lawrence of the Kamber Group have been researching the Ogden Corporation, looking for weak points where the union can apply pressure. The Kamber Group's participation paid immediate dividends. The Chicago media treated the city's first corporate campaign as a major event, and headlines about "Labor's New Weapon" appeared in all the city's newspapers and business weeklies. The coverage was a potent tonic for the strikers' morale.

While Local 15271 members picketed at the factory gates, passed out leaflets near the scabs' homes and protested the actions of the Chicago policemen, the Kamber Group's research turned up other targets. Strikers traveled to Wabash, Indiana, where Wabash Alloys, an Ogden subsidiary, is located, to distribute leaflets about Ogden's strikebreaking activities. At the same time, U.S.W.A. staff members launched an organizing campaign at one of Wabash's primary customers, which is a nonunion firm. When the Kamber Group discovered that Ogden Food Services was running a concession at the Poplar Creek Music Theatre, held outside Chicago, unionists appeared with leaflets to inform concertgoers of Ogden's antiunion efforts. Even Danly's public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, was not spared. When steelworkers and their supporters demonstrated against that firm's offices in Chicago and New York, the story was printed not only in Chicago papers, but in *The Wall Street Journal* and in national trade journals.

The thin-skinned Ogden executives reacted angrily when the leafleters appeared in Wabash. Furious corporate officials charged the union with engaging in an illegal secondary boycott, demanded that the police put a stop to it and set up surveillance cameras outside the plant. When union members went to the Poplar Creek festival they were met by festival officials who attempted to prevent them from distributing the leaflets. But the unionists defeated Ogden's attempts to muzzle them by buying tickets to the concert and passing out leaflets after Willie Nelson had completed his performance.

The union scored another success in Chicago, where its noisy demonstrations in front of City Hall so embarrassed Mayor Harold Washington that he issued an order, over the objections of the Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.), forbidding policemen from working as security guards during strikes.

Unlike the F.O.P., most Chicago unions have rallied to Local 15271's support. Numerous checks earmarked for the strike fund arrive daily from metropolitan area locals. United Automobile Workers locals in Michigan, discovering that Danly had sent nonunion workers to install equipment in auto plants in that state, made their displeasure known, and the company sent them away. Leaders of the

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Chicago Fire Fighters, remembering that Romano and other Local 15271 members had marched in support of their bitter strike three years before, gave money, marched on the picket line and offered to print in their newsletter the names of the police officers who were moonlighting as security guards. Even the Chicago Federation of Labor, long a bastion of the city establishment, pledged solidarity. At a rally in Cicero its new president, Edward Brabek, who formerly headed a conservative plumbers' local, shared the podium with Lynn Williams, Ed Sadlowski, Studs Terkel, Representative Charles Hayes and Bob C. Hayes, president of the Illinois A.F.L.-C.I.O.

To show solidarity with the strikers, Jack Metzgar of the Midwest Center for Labor Research organized a citizens' support committee. Politicians on both sides of Chicago's Council wars between Mayor Washington and Edward Vrdolyak, joined by local priests, academics and even small-business men, signed an appeal to Ogden to cease its strike-breaking efforts. In Chicago's insular business community the Ogden conglomerate, rather than the U.S.W.A., has become the outsider.

The International's extraordinary efforts on behalf of Local 15271 have not as yet produced any significant movement by management. It is unclear whether the company's decision to send two of its brass to meet with Steelworkers District 31 president Jack Parton just before Labor Day signals an interest in a settlement. Assuming it does not, on September 5 union leaders and the Kamber Group announced strategies to expand the campaign against Ogden. These include plans to distribute anti-Danly leaflets at the annual Machine Tool Trade Show in Chicago. When Danly got wind of the plans, it withdrew from the show, the first time it has not participated in forty years. Williams wrote to union leaders in the Chicago area, asking them whether they have significant business relationships with the two Chicago-area banks that own shares in Ogden, First Chicago and American National Bank and Trust. Eventually, unionists hope, those banks will begin to wonder whether their involvement with Ogden is worth the aggravation.

Members of Ogden's board of directors are also targets of the corporate campaign. Leaflets giving the union's side of the dispute are to be distributed at universities, law firms, banks and foundations with which the directors are connected. The union is even talking of enlisting Ogden stockholders in a proxy fight against management, charging it with incompetence.

One thing the union will not do is sponsor a boycott against the products of other Ogden subsidiaries. Although the conglomerate would seem to be vulnerable to consumer boycotts against such products as Progresso soups, Hain health foods, Hollywood natural products and Ogden food concessions at racetracks and on airlines, current Federal labor law precludes such reprisals, despite the fact that profits from those operations could be used by Ogden to tide it over while production at the Danly plant is curtailed by the strike.

The outcome of the campaign against Ogden cannot be predicted, given the intense economic pressures the Danly strikers are facing. What is clear is that the United Steelworkers has awakened to the threats posed by militantly antilabor multinational corporations. Not long after the Kamber Group was called in to assist the strikers, it began conferring with U.S.W.A. officials about working with the beleaguered unionists in the Phelps Dodge strike. Williams and Howard Samuel, head of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s industrial union department, plan to go to Wall Street to talk to the banks and insurance companies that participated in the copper company's recent debt restructuring. Their message: Phelps Dodge's attack on the union is hurting not only the company and the copper industry but the lending institu-

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tions themselves and, by extension, the unions that have invested money in the financial institutions.

Back in Chicago, unionists have learned valuable lessons from the opening skirmishes of the Ogden strike. They've learned what corporate campaigns are all about; even more important, they are relearning the meaning of an old labor term—solidarity. □

LIGHT INFANTRY DIVISIONS

The 'In-Between' Deployment Force

MICHAEL T. KLARE

The U.S. Army seeks to form five light infantry divisions whose primary mission will be intervention in the Third World. The plan, disclosed in the Defense Department's budget proposal for fiscal 1985, reflects the Pentagon's stepped-up interest in "low-intensity conflict," meaning counterinsurgency and police-type operations in underdeveloped regions. As Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger explained in his 1985 budget report, "Both an expansion of U.S. interests in the Third World and an increase in Third World conflicts have forced us to focus more attention there."

Normally, the Defense Department would prefer to use standard combat units—particularly armored and mechanized infantry divisions—in overseas operations, but they are expensive to equip and maintain. Annual operating costs of one combat division can run as high as $5 billion, according to some estimates. They are also difficult to transport. It takes at least twelve days and 1,500 sorties by C-141 aircraft to move one regular infantry division to the Persian Gulf, and much longer for mechanized and armored divisions. Given those constraints and what it sees as the need for additional interventionary forces [see Klare, "May the Force Project Us," *The Nation*, February 25], the Army has responded with unusual ingenuity for such a tradition-bound institution. It dreamed up the light division of 10,000 soldiers (a regular infantry division has 18,000), equipped with guided missiles and mobile artillery, but not tanks, and capable of being flown to the Middle East or other distant Third World area in just four days.

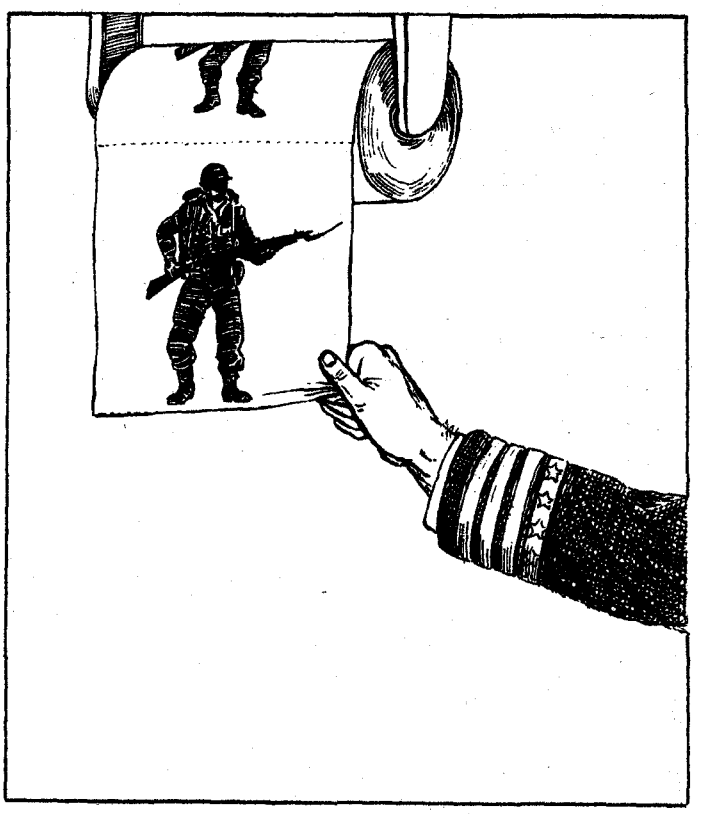
Plans call for the first light infantry unit to be established in 1985 by reorganizing the 7th Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Ord, California. A second unit will be built up over the next three years; three more 10,000-strong divisions may be established later. The Army sees them as elite units. They will be specially trained for night operations and rapid battlefield maneuvers. Although they will theoretically be usable in such major trouble spots as the Middle East and Korea, they are principally intended for less demanding combat environments—primarily, Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia. "Central America is pretty high up on the list," a top Pentagon official told Michael Gordon of *National Journal*.

Some strategists say the new divisions will meet the need for additional interventionary forces. "We've got to have something between the low covert and special-forces end of the spectrum and World War II [in Europe] revisited," says Robert H. Kupperman, executive director for science and technology at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies and a consultant to the Defense Department. "You need in-between-size light, flexible forces, and you need to be able to apply those forces for political and military ends and get the hell out."

Even when outnumbered by enemy forces, proponents argue, the light units could deter hostile action by demonstrating America's determination to protect its interests. "Their rapid deployability will enable them to arrive in a crisis area before a conflict begins," Army Chief of Staff Gen. John A. Wickham Jr. noted in a position paper on the light divisions. "By demonstrating U.S. resolve and capability, they may well prevent the outbreak of war."

The units could have this deterrent effect, insists former Under Secretary of Defense Robert W. Komer, even in such highly strategic locales as the Persian Gulf. "The key is to be the firstest with the leastest," he argues, thereby presenting the Russians or their clients with the daunting prospect of a confrontation with American power—thus inducing them to back down.

Some analysts do not share his optimistic view. The most prevalent criticism is that the divisions will be too small and



Michael T. Klare, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, is the author of several books, including the forthcoming American Arms Supermarket *(University of Texas Press).*

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The Nation January Inauguration issue was devoted entirely to E.P. Thompson's compelling essay on the clear and present danger of nuclear war.

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too undergunned to take on any significant opponent. They will be particularly vulnerable, critics charge, without tanks and heavy artillery to repel enemy armored forces, a threat the divisions would surely face in confrontations with Soviet-style armies like those of Syria, Iraq, Libya or Vietnam. In response to that objection, the Army has announced plans to reinforce the divisions with sizable "plugs" of artillery and armor, a solution that seems to invalidate the reason for forming them. "There are not too many places in the world where a 10,000-man light division doesn't have to be turned into something else," one Pentagon opponent points out.

There is another danger not being voiced by the dissenters: the availability of rapidly deployable units of this sort will encourage U.S. officials to intervene in future conflicts. To appreciate that risk, it is necessary to examine briefly the Army's existing divisional structure.

Most of the Army's regular divisions are assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or are reserved for such specific contingencies as a war in Korea or the Persian Gulf. That leaves only a few units—notably, the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Air Assault Division—for deployment in other combat zones. Those elite units must be used sparingly, lest the United States be caught with its mobile strike force in one place when a major crisis occurs somewhere else.

With the addition of several light infantry divisions Washington will have another option: it could hold the 82nd and the 101st in reserve for situations they are best equipped to deal with, while employing the light divisions in low-level interventions. Although the existence of an option does not necessarily mean that Washington would automatically exercise it in a crisis, the Vietnam War and the invasion of Grenada suggest that a capacity for intervention tends to be accompanied by a propensity for such action. "If it is easy for us to go anywhere and do anything," Senator Richard B. Russell once observed, "we will always be going somewhere and doing something."

It is in this context that Komer's reference to being the "firstest with the leastest" becomes most ominous. Perhaps the early arrival of a small U.S. expeditionary force would deter an enemy force. Then again, the adversary might not back down in the face of such a symbolic action but might confront U.S. light units with the prospect of defeat or annihilation, just as Britain's Light Brigade was wiped out by Russian artillery in the Crimean War battle memorialized by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It is this, more than anything else, that should provoke fear, for it is unlikely that Washington would countenance a defeat. Instead, it would most likely send in additional U.S. forces, and climb up the escalation ladder until U.S. superiority was assured. In today's overarmed, hair-trigger world, that could lead into the realm of thermonuclear warfare. The Army's light infantry divisions appear to be nothing more than a mobile tripwire for another Vietnam, or something a whole lot worse.

"Someone had blundered," Tennyson wrote in his famous poem; someone had ordered a lightly armed cavalry unit to ride into the valley of death and the jaws of waiting cannon.

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The results were predictably catastrophic—and will be again if U.S. officials feel the need to "do something" in some murky conflict overseas by sending in the light infantry, risking the lives of U.S. soldiers and possibly igniting World War III. □

New Politics

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

ness and hostility toward labor. Still, they are thinking, and more difficult, thinking about themselves: Where did we go wrong? What can we do better? How do we get our ideas taken seriously by the ever fickle public?

In the face of internal questioning by both the right and the center, the left's reluctance to discuss its own ideas critically is striking. During the 1960s, the American left was unafraid to question empire, the welfare state and the damage done by the profit motive. Since then, radicals have consistently suppressed their own best instincts for the sake of respectability. If the left is ever to rival its ideological competitors, it must challenge American commitments both to economic growth and to empire. Such a strategy would not be popular in the current political mood, but moods change. When Americans begin to recognize the price they have paid to keep their illusions about the world alive, there had better be a political force that offers them an alternative.

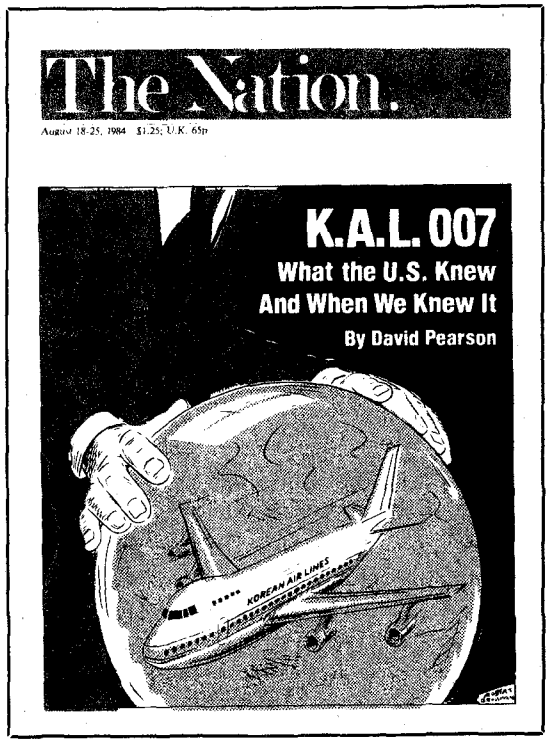
Some signs of a willingness to examine ideas can already be detected on the left. Two of the most hopeful—detailed plans for economic revitalization and the success of the nuclear freeze—illustrate well the left's hard choice between ideals and political impotence, on the one hand, and power and ideological impotence on the other.

Like law firms, books by radical economists carry lists of names: there are Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf; Carnoy, Shearer and Rumberger; Bluestone and Harrison; and Alperovitz and Faux, to mention the best.* At one level, this attention to economics by members of the New Left generation is a sign of maturity. Having been asked for so many years, "What's your alternative?" radical economists are preparing twenty-four-point programs, position papers and even bumper-sticker-style slogans.

Yet if attention to economics is a sign of maturity, it is also an acknowledgment of the futility of radical politics. The nub of the problem, according to many radical economists, is that America does not produce *enough*. Management, Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf typically argue, has become an obstacle to growth: relying on democratic poten-

* Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon and Thomas E. Weisskopf, *Beyond the Waste Land: A Democratic Alternative to Economic Decline* (Anchor/Doubleday). Martin Carnoy, Derek Shearer and Russell Rumberger, *A New Social Contract: The Economy and Government After Reagan* (Harper & Row). Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (Basic Books). Gar Alperovitz and Jeff Faux, *Rebuilding America: A Blueprint for the New Economy* (Pantheon).

Alan Wolfe is a member of The Nation*'s editorial board. An expanded version of his* The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Threat *has recently been published by South End Press.*



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tial and worker-led innovation would not only be more just, it would also unleash growth and productivity.

Like European social democrats, American liberals found that growth could finance increased government spending with less controversy than could direct redistribution. Yet in committing themselves to economic expansion, they put themselves at the mercy of business. By picking up the growth standard, radicals find themselves defending General Motors because the alternative is Toyota. (Thanks to Bob Kuttner for the phrase.) Never asked is whether America might rethink the idea that cars are the best way to get from one place to another.

The decisions that have to be made about our economy are political decisions, not economic ones, and they will be determined by the forces that command the levers of political power. Change the distribution of power by mobilizing people around a vision of how they could lead a better life and the left will have some input into those decisions. The left's strength lies in its ability to remind Americans that the economy must be shaped to fit their conception of the public interest, not the other way around. Neither neoconservatism nor neoliberalism can talk seriously about the common good because both allow private centers of power to determine it indirectly. If there is, in short, no left position on what society's values should be, there will be no sense of what society's ultimate values are—which is roughly the state America is in at the present time.

The retreat from politics implicit in the left's preoccupation with economics also surfaces in its discussions of foreign policy. The nuclear freeze is the single most successful policy initiative the left has sponsored in two decades. The secret of its success is that it demands so little of the American people. That is the reason for its failure as well. Americans have given their support, sometimes active, often tacit, to their leaders to be bullies to the world, and not until someone talks the truth to them will they be prepared to listen to an alternative vision of how the world might be organized.

'WERE THE ROSENBERGS FRAMED?'

This historic debate, which was sponsored by The Nation and The New Republic at New York City's Town Hall last October 20th, has been described as "a political-literary brawl" (Los Angeles Times), at which "a cheering, jeering crowd of 1,500 followed every jab in a fight over history" (The Washington Post).

The main participants in the debate were: Walter Schneir and Miriam Schneir, authors, Invitation to an Inquest; Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, authors, and Sol Stern, research assistant, The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth; and Elizabeth Holtzman, moderator. There were also questions and comments from Michael Meeropol, Morton Sobell, Marshall Perlin, James Weinstein, Victor Navasky and others.

A complete record of this extraordinary event can now be purchased in transcript or cassette. Transcripts are available for $24 each; cassettes are $19 each. There are special discounts on orders of five or more. Send check or money order, payable to The Nation, to: "Rosenbergs," The Nation, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011 (a project of The Nation Institute).

No doubt there are deep psychic satisfactions in what William Appleman Williams has called empire as a way of life. A political movement that questions efforts to control the internal workings of other societies can therefore expect to draw suspicion and hostility. Yet to run away from a critique of empire because it is unpopular ignores two realities that can never be ignored for long. One is that America has a history of opposition to overseas entanglements; when the left does not make a credible case against foreign meddling, right-wing isolationism and chauvinism fill the gap. Besides, empire costs money, and the American people do not like to be taxed. The ingredients for a radical alternative to empire have always existed in this country; missing recently is the will to put them together.

In the absence of a critique of empire, the nuclear freeze enables candidates to endorse peace while calling for a buildup of conventional arms. It avoids the question of whether nuclear weapons could be dismantled, not frozen at their present level. Far from raising public awareness of the dangers of nuclear war, the freeze makes it appear as if a solution is at hand that in no way interferes with American power. Question the assumptions of empire, and we can begin to question its instruments as well.

Most important, the left must recover a sense of speaking for the public interest, not for the collected self-interests of a mob of constituencies. To do that, the left must take the lead in asking what kind of values America should embody. Commitments to growth and imperial expansion make it impossible to raise such questions. Growth compels speaking the language of economics, surely one of the most restrictive and passionless sets of assumptions ever invented to discuss the human condition. And empire demands unity and consensus, hardly the seedbed for the diversity of opinion and plurality of values needed to direct America toward new goals. Yet no society can exist forever without a sense of purpose. If the debate shifts to ultimate ends—and American history has been characterized by rapid swings from times like the present, when private concerns prevail, to periods of intense preoccupation with public goals—the left might have a significant role to play. The strength of any radical movement lies in its mission to hold society up to its ideals.

There are three ideals that the left might articulate: responsibility as an alternative to individualism and collectivism; sufficiency rather than efficiency as a principle of economic organization; and sustainability rather than exploitation so as to relate one generation's needs to another's.

In its legitimate skepticism toward individualism, the left around the world came to stand for collectivity. Now not

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only Soviet-style socialism but also the impasse of European social democracy has given collectivism a bad name. Perhaps the single most difficult question for radical self-scrutiny is whether there are alternatives to bureaucracy as a substitute for the alienation of liberal individualism.

The welfare state's great accomplishment was its protection of people against the pernicious notion that they have no control over their fate. But because it was organized bureaucratically, the welfare state achieved that goal by diffusing a sense of individual responsibility. Because the state was responsible for everyone, no one needed to be responsible for anyone. The flaw in the welfare state was not just its cost (the conservative critique) but its contribution to a mass, anonymous society. In such a society, people go to great lengths to protect themselves against the assumption of responsibility for others, both by locking themselves behind doors and by securing themselves with nuclear weapons.

The New Left once castigated the welfare state; now radicals fall all over themselves to defend programs with unlimited costs and a diminished sense of purpose. Government is so expensive and unwieldy in the United States partly because it must make up for social irresponsibility: the welfare state picks up the tab for the economic irresponsibility caused by the workings of the market; pollution controls offset corporate irresponsibility; the defense budget compensates for the lack of solidarity among nations. An ethic of responsibility might mean less government because there might be less need to use the government. Certainly there will be no end to massive public expenditures and deficits so long as people are willing to dump their responsibilities on the state.

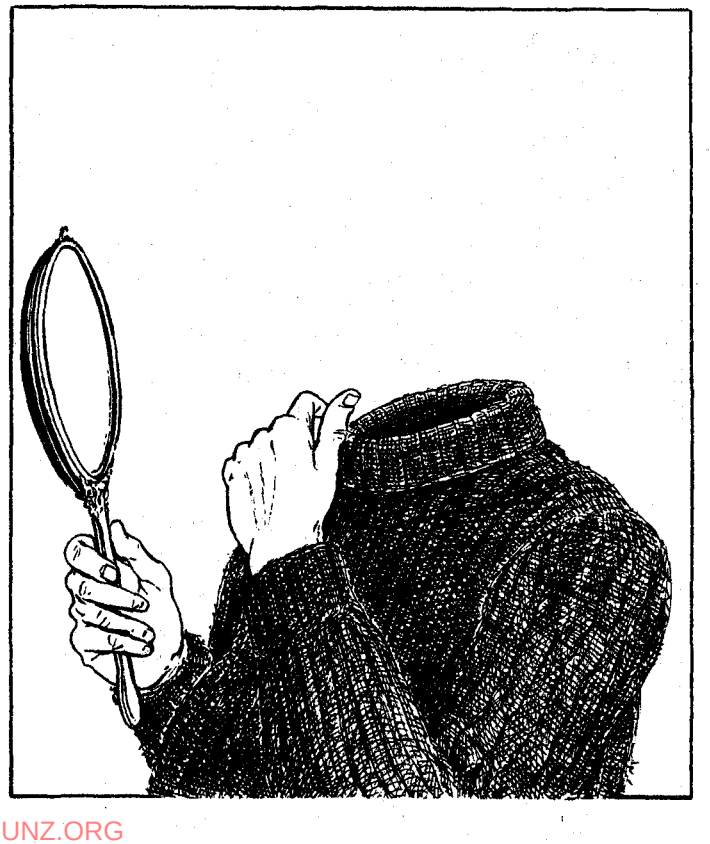
Just as responsibility is an alternative to individualism and collectivism, sufficiency would be a more sensible purpose for economic activity than efficiency. The great promise of an efficient economy is that it will fulfill people's needs in the cheapest possible way. Yet there is no fixed point at which needs can be satiated. A growing economy creates needs, continually putting out of reach the bliss it offers as its reward. A contracting economy, in its quest for efficiency, meets foreign competition by forcing as much austerity as it can on those powerless to resist. Boom or bust, the promise of efficiency is a mirage, a shifting foundation for a political program.

A sufficient economy, in contrast, enables its members to satisfy themselves by internally created, not externally derived, standards. Satisfaction has a peculiarly relative, not absolute, quality: internally cohesive societies with fewer consumer goods, such as many countries of Northern Europe, seem far more satisfied with themselves than those that are growing rapidly but unraveling socially. Sufficiency also applies to defense. The United States spends fantastic amounts on defense and still manifests rampant insecurity. Finland, in contrast, shares a border with its historic enemy, spends little on defense yet possesses a far stronger sense of security than we do. Sufficient societies, in a word, are secure because they have decided that they are secure.

Sustainability, the belief that we can get out of the world only what we put into it, has a long history in a society that originated on the land. So strong is that heritage that even James Watt was unable totally to turn the public domain over to private extractors. Yet if Americans have an implicit ecological consciousness, they have never viewed sustainability as a metaphor for how to live their lives.

Like sufficiency, sustainability is a social concept tying one generation to the next. The economy's inability to sustain the society that feeds it is not perceived as a problem because each generation passes on to the next the costs of its policies. Ronald Reagan could succeed only in a society that has no consciousness of the future. He has managed to stimulate some economic growth, but by insuring that future generations will pay heavily for it. He has made people feel more secure and will surely be dead when they discover how much they had to pay for that feeling. The funny thing is that Americans pride themselves on their concern for children, all the while passing on to future generations the social and economic costs of their failure to consider sustainability in their public policies. The left has a major opportunity to talk about the commitment that one generation must make to another, since no other political tendency has a language that even allows it to perceive intergenerational trust as a political issue.

Values like responsibility, sufficiency and sustainability challenge the priorities established by the New Deal. They offer both a different sense of how the world works and a different strategy for improving it than did the traditional Democratic Party of the postwar years. Fulfill the needs of groups, runs the logic of the New Deal, and the social good will follow. Define the social good, the alternative vision demands, and then discuss group needs. Since politics is generally about the reconciliation of group objectives, rethinking the objectives of American politics will compel the left to rethink the means to achieve its ends as well. □



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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Women at Large

MAUREEN QUILLIGAN

THE WEAKER VESSEL. *By Antonia Fraser. Alfred A. Knopf. 544 pp. $19.95.*

The Weaker Vessel, Lady Antonia Fraser's study of women in seventeenth-century England, opens with a personal anecdote. Fraser described the topic of her new book to a distinguished (male) friend; before vanishing into his club, he turned and asked, "*Were* there any women in seventeenth-century England?" *The Weaker Vessel* is her attempt "in part at least" to answer that question. The answer, more than 500 pages long, is armed with a host of anecdotes as telling as the one about the jesting clubman. As any modern historian might have told the fellow, it requires a significant degree of perversity to persist in thinking that history has been a masculine enterprise. Obviously there were women in seventeenth-century England. The question for us, heirs and heiresses of that pivotal moment in early modern England, is: What kinds, and what were they doing?

Fraser's unofficial subtitle gives us a preview of her findings and approach: "Women in 17th-century England—heiresses and dairymaids, holy women and prostitutes, criminals and educators, widows and witches, midwives and mothers, heroines, courtesans, prophetesses, businesswomen, ladies of the court, and that new breed, the actress." That generous list illustrates the book's virtue—its teeming fullness and diversity—and its vice, if such profligacy can be termed a vice—its crowded particularity. Reading *The Weaker Vessel* is rather like looking at Brueghel's "Children's Games," where each inch of canvas is crammed with life: some groups of figures salacious, some edifying, some enigmatic. Insofar as Fraser gives this picture a unifying theme, it is the powerful impediment posed by the definition of woman as "the weaker vessel." Supported by theological, social, legal and political edicts and backed up by the nearly perpetual pregnancy that seventeenth-century women endured (with fifteen to twenty a not unusual number), this definition shaped a woman's life.

The most obvious counter to this description of seventeenth-century women can be found in the behavior of a great many women during England's civil war, nine years of martial mayhem that preoccupied and disrupted much of the population during the middle years of the century. Fraser tells us that she was first attracted to her topic by the numerous stories she encountered of valiant women who fought in that war. They are the "heroines" of Fraser's subtitle, and include such notable viragos as Mary Lady Bankes, intransigent defender of (royalist) Corfe Castle, who during a siege took command of the castle's upper ward and, aided by her daughters, her women servants and five soldiers, defeated the enemy by heaving stones and hot embers over the walls onto their scaling ladders. By way of contrast, Fraser recounts the tactics of a more "modest" heroine, Brilliana Lady Harley, whose defense of Brampton Bryan Castle relied on manipulations of the attacking (royalist) army's chivalrous reluctance to assault a "weaker vessel." The castle surrendered only after Lady Harley had died and its defenders could no longer rely on the protection due her "sex and honour."

These generally highborn Boadiceas provide the most predictable stories Fraser tells. Far more compelling are the anecdotes that reveal the extensive range of female activity in less traumatic, if no less political, contexts during the revolutionary century between the death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession of Queen Anne. We meet, for example, Mrs. Constance Pley, an indefatigable and successful businesswoman who ran her family's marine supply company, boldly dunning her King for payments constantly in arrears. We meet Cromwell's eccentric granddaughter, Bridget Bendish, at work all day beside male laborers in the salt mines she inherited from her husband and, in the evenings, a brilliant presence splendidly dressed for social occasions. We meet Joan Dant, who began as a penniless widow and died at the age of 84 worth more than £9,000, with business connections in Paris and Brussels.

Fraser's guess as to why seventeenth-century women were permitted to engage in business activities when female authorship, for instance, was a serious social transgression is an example of the acute commentary that accompanies her stories: "After all, business practice in a woman could be seen as an extension of her role as the mainstay of her household, whereas learning and authorship were dangerously unfeminine pursuits." (Just now, when the politics surrounding Geraldine Ferraro have made domestic expertise in its largest sense a qualification for high office, such reasoning seems quite apt.) Fraser is always aware of how the grid that overlay women's opportunities decreed the form of whatever achievements were made. But she does not pause to suggest that the businesswoman may also have been an acceptable and honored figure because no one realized (or would admit) that business was in great part what the civil war had been about: the revolution and the subsequent Restoration had an economic impact as profound as, and more pervasive than, the political and theological upheavals. As for the prejudice against women authors, I suggest that it descended from Renaissance Humanism, which made knowledge of the classical languages, especially Latin, a prerequisite for membership in the ruling elite. It was worth censuring female authorship because it seemed close to laying claim to such membership, just as it was worth omitting classical training from female education (a lack Fraser passionately laments). Very much later, when literature had dwindled into social ornament, divorced from the real business of society—business itself—petticoat authors were allowed more freedom, and petticoat entrepreneurs far less.

This is not to suggest that all radical developments in the seventeenth century were unconscious—although a mid-century confusion over what privileges property ownership conferred allowed a temporary accident of local female suffrage, a freedom soon squelched. In the personal history of Elizabeth Lilburne, wife to the famous Leveller John Lilburne, Fraser analyzes the transformation of the "petitioning women" of the 1640s—women who claimed for themselves a "proportionate share in the

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Maureen Quilligan is co-editor of the forthcoming Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe *(University of Chicago Press).*

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freedom of this Commonwealth"—into the "despairing—but still soliciting—wife of the 1650s."

One of the most absorbing sets of stories Fraser tells concerns women from the independent religious sects that arose during the period Christopher Hill described as the moment "the world turned upside down." While these women did not float to the top on the breath of sacred inspiration, they could make political claims for themselves that had not been possible before, and Fraser traces the effects of religious experimentation on their lives.

The extraordinary travels and travails of some Quaker women, preaching both in England and New England, do indeed "compel one's awe." One Elizabeth Hooton, although she had petitioned and won from King Charles a certificate empowering her to settle in New England, was hounded wherever she went. She was tied to a Cambridge, Massachusetts, whipping post and "lashed ten times with a three-stringed whip, three knots in each string." Subsequently, "at Watertown, willow-rods were used; at Dedham . . . she received ten lashes at the cart-tail." Beaten and torn, she refused to give up, persisting in her ministry for five years in Massachusetts before returning to England. Mary Fisher went even further: having suffered her share of flogging in New England, she was later received hospitably by the Sultan and Vizier of Turkey: "There was a certain irony in the fact that the low position of women in the Moslem world enabled the Turks . . . to appreciate . . . how remarkable an individual Mary Fisher must be."

Fraser traces a general arc of opportunity for English women that rises to its high point with "The Petition of Women" (for government reforms and the release of imprisoned Levellers) in 1649 and moves toward its nadir as the century draws to a close and the monarchy returns. It is regrettable that there is no considered discussion here of the impact of the Restoration on women's position. Doubtless Fraser's attention to such analysis was diverted by her interest in an intriguing creation of the Restoration: the actress, spectacular star of the new and wittily decadent stage. No women had, of course, played on English stages before Charles II brought back with him a continental taste for seeing pretty women perform—and a concomitant taste for pretty women as mistresses. One of the in-

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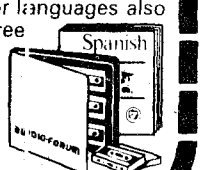

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triguing bits of information Fraser lavishly dispenses is that the forms of address "Mrs." and "Miss" did not distinguish women in terms of their marital status but in terms of *moral* categories: "Mrs." was used for respectable women and "Miss" for the other kind. Many of the "Mrs. Johnsons" and "Mrs. Uphills" listed in Restoration dramatis personae bore honorifics which granted respectability where few expected—and many wanted—to find it. "Mrs." was pronounced "Mistress"—which with these actresses was often (and often royally) the case.

In a sense, Fraser can't help but portray the age as a reflection of its monarch or, in the case of Cromwell, its Protector. It is almost as if the undeniably attractive and charming personality of Charles II (a personality Fraser has chronicled in her engaging *Royal Charles*) was the pivot that turned his glittering world. (Perhaps the character of the King does have an impact equal to the muter political forces of the economy at large.) Oliver Cromwell, another of Fraser's earlier subjects, was not without gallantry himself, and in one of the stranger developments described in *The Weaker Vessel*, the Protector's own weakness for pleading ladies led to long lines of royalist women asking for mercy (and certificates of sequestration) at the hands of the Committee for Compounding after the civil war. As the imprisoned Thomas Knyvett wrote to his wife in 1644, "Women solicitors are observed to have better Audience than masculine malignants."

Fraser has written lengthy and masterful biographies of three English rulers, James I, Charles II and Cromwell, and is, of course, the author of the immensely and deservedly popular *Mary Queen of Scots*. That she has chosen not to devote an entire book to any one of the intriguing commoners in her latest work does not mean that for this biographer it takes the lives of innumerable ordinary women to equal in historical importance the life of a single ruler. Her interests here differ, and thus her procedures begin to move her from the study of personality to demographics and social history. For the need to chronicle so specifically the deeds of so many stretches the biographer's art—almost to the breaking point. Because Fraser wishes to exemplify different arguments, she often breaks up an individual woman's story into widely separated chapters. This necessitates many references backward and forward in the book, which impedes her narrative and blurs the impact of any single figure. If she has felt compelled to sacrifice pace and analysis to inclusiveness, she has done so in order to persuade us that the real experience of seventeenth-century women was in the heterogeneous lives of individuals. Other historians and theoreticians may choose to neaten her picture by other kinds of analysis or feel the need to make her points more precise and explanatory. But it will be hard for anyone to paint a fuller, more vivid or more abundantly detailed portrait of women in seventeenth-century England. □

Prophecies and Heresies

ERNST PAWEL

CASSANDRA: A Novel and Four Essays. *By Christa Wolf. Translated by Jan van Heurck. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 305 pp. $17.95.*

Despite a penchant for privacy and an admirable disdain for self-promotion, Christa Wolf has established herself in the course of the past two decades as one of the foremost figures in contemporary German literature. Since she makes her home "on the other side" of the wall and is indisputably female, she has been pedantically relegated to the categories of East German author and woman writer. The labels, accurate as far as they go, fail to capture the spirit of her work and don't begin to do justice to her status as a cult figure among the younger generation in both parts of the divided country. Her books are now published simultaneously in sizable editions in both East and West Germany. And though she is indeed a woman writer, not just by gender but by conscious and articulate affirmation, her feminism defies easy definition. Instead of merely challenging established institutions, she examines their underlying assumptions and presumptions in a deceptively low key and in a rational voice far more subversive than that of her more strident counterparts. For in the final analysis, what she calls into question is nothing less than our collective memory of the past.

Even at that, Wolf does not qualify as a dissident in the conventional sense. It is the writer's job to seek the truth, the bureaucrat's to hide it. The two are natural enemies, and Wolf has had her share of troubles with predatory apparatchiks. She can be stubborn in her own quiet way, believing, for instance, that "to prevent wars, people must criticize, in their own country, the abuses that occur in their own country." Yet even when she ran afoul of censorship in the past—*The Quest for Christa T.* was banned for several years—the objections to her work had less to do with its overt or implied criticism of the regime than with its larger thrust and with the author's conspicuous and irrepressible originality. She asked her own questions, and she did so in a voice distinctly her own. Those are dangerous heresies in certain parts of the world, where authoritarians, compelled to punish or perish, develop a freakish ability to sniff out deviationism and other thought crimes long before they actually surface.

In any event, in a totally politicized society, writers can never be apolitical; what they fail to write about will be held against them as much as what they choose to express. Christa Wolf, a woman thoroughly at home with the minutiae of daily life in both city and country, seems more than capable of measuring the gap that separates demagogic promises from actual fulfillment, and banal slogans from day-to-day reality. Her concerns, however, center not on politics and politicians but on the much broader issue of the individual at odds with society. In Eastern Europe, the pressure to conform is brutal, open and ubiquitous; Western society exerts its pressures far more indirectly, but whether this makes resistance and the cultivation of true autonomy significantly easier is at least arguable.

In *A Model Childhood* (first published in the United States in 1980 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux and recently reprinted under the title *Patterns of Childhood*) she made a highly personal effort to come to terms with the collec-

Ernst Pawel is a novelist and author of The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux).*

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tive past by explaining to the generation of her own children what growing up in Hitler's Germany had meant to her. At 15, she witnessed the collapse of Nazism and the installation of the Ulbricht regime. Although different in their goals and methods--to minimize the differences between those two strains of totalitarianism distorts the meaning and memory of a time and place—both regimes proved equal in their zeal to reward conformity and extirpate individuality as an antisocial vice.

This conflict between collective and individual selves was explored with great subtlety in *The Quest for Christa T.*, written in 1970. Despite its thoroughly nonpolitical and nonpolemical tone, the book triggered instant reactions from the censors as well as from the public at large, most notably from young people on either side of the wall. The fact that it had so clearly touched upon a subject of passionate concern in both East and West Germany made its suppression impracticable in the long run.

But the struggle for a balance, or at least a livable compromise, between alienation and rootedness, between social integration and individual freedom, inevitably led Wolf to discoveries that opened up much larger and far more disquieting perspectives: the individual, in this instance, was a woman seeking personal autonomy as well as artistic independence within a power structure not only all-male but shaped almost exclusively by male myths, laws, traditions, customs and prejudices. The consciousness of Western civilization, quite irrespective of political systems, grew out of the highly selective historical memories of what happened in history as seen and recorded by the self-styled lords of creation.

In *Cassandra*, her latest work, Christa Wolf tackles nothing less than the skein of myth, tradition and belief inherent in the gods and heroes of the Homeric universe. The four essays that form the second half of the book provide fascinating glimpses of a first-rate mind searching for truths beyond the platitudes of tradition, a mind at once restless and serene. There are some marvelous descriptions of people and places in Greece, particularly in Crete. In luminous prose, Christa Wolf writes about Easter in a Greek village, about Athenian cops, Minoan palaces and the wrath—or temper tantrums—of Achilles. But hers is travel with a purpose. Painstakingly, with a determination rivaling that of the archeologists she learns to envy and admire, she digs up shards and fragments of Homeric myths and tries to fit them into her emerging vision of that ancient world.

Cassandra, the novel itself, which precedes the essays in this combined edition, closes in on the last few moments in the life of the legendary prophetess. Reduced to an object in shackles, war booty brought back to Mycenae by the victorious Agamemnon, she knows that within hours she and her captor will both be dead, slain by the treacherous Clytemnestra. A rebel in the cause of reason, resigned to her fate but not to its inevitability, Cassandra unravels, in one last, backward glance, the whole tangled chain of vanity, deceit and madness that led up to this bloody finale. And what emerges, in the end, is a clear-eyed woman's version of the Trojan War, quite radically at odds with that of the blind Homer.

One hesitates to call it a feminist version simply because Wolf's whole outlook is militantly prohuman and wise enough to discern the virus of reverse male chauvinism in much of what passes for feminist militancy. But in this magnificent prose poem of a counter-*Iliad*, it is Cassandra, cursed with the gift of prophecy and fated to earn nothing but contempt and ridicule for her predictions, who becomes the tragic heroine. Her prophetic gifts are ultimately no more—and no less—than the ability to see the obvious. By exposing the vapid rhetoric of greed and murderous ideals, and by denouncing the primitive fears and stunted emotions that make men exalt senseless butchery as a sacred duty—"the honor of our house is at stake"—Cassandra earns her death as a true heroine, while Homer's gutless heroes go on to spawn an endless line of equally craven conformists who "fear murder less than they fear disapproval."

Brief as it is, this terse and moving work defies summary. With knowledge, insight and foreboding, Christa Wolf has brilliantly rewritten history, and in viewing the past through the eyes of the doomed seer, she traces its link to our own imminent future. The question she leaves eloquently unasked is whether mankind—men, women and children alike—will this time listen to Cassandra before the Trojan horses already in their silos deliver a final answer. □

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The Mind's Machine

SUSAN CHACE

THE SECOND SELF: Computers and the Human Spirit. *By Sherry Turkle. Simon & Schuster. 362 pp. $17.95.*

It is now not uncommon for people struggling to understand themselves to appropriate the computer as a metaphor. They talk about "reprogramming" themselves to get over a failed romance. They ask for "input" or "feedback" after an "interface" with another human being. The brain, largely water and without electronic parts, is seen as a mass of circuits and wires, conducting information to and from memory. The metaphor is so seductive that even a poet as idiosyncratic as Robert Lowell referred to the practice of his craft as "this processing of words."

The fact that computers are making inroads into everyday life and language has a special significance for the part of the scientific community that holds that the computer is a good mirror for the human mind. "A computer isn't just another machine like an automobile or a train," says Heinz Pagels, the director of the New York Academy of Science. "It's an information processing machine, and that's what we are too, in part. This is the first age to witness a face-to-face encounter of natural intelligence and artificially intelligent machines. It can't fail to transform the way we think of ourselves."

That anticipated transformation is the subject of Sherry Turkle's book, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. A self-described anthropologist of "computer cultures," Turkle believes that the advent of the computer has caused a dramatic shift in man's overall self-perception: "Before the computer, the animals, mortal though not sentient, seemed our nearest neighbors in the known universe. Computers, with their interactivity, their psychology, with whatever fragments of intelligence they have, now bid for this place."

In support of her point that man now thinks he is more like a computer than a monkey, Turkle, an associate professor at M.I.T., spent six years searching out and chronicling the encounters of people and computers in computer culture pockets and in academic circles where computers are already an integral part of people's lives. She believes that her findings indicate what will happen when computers are commonplace tools like pens and pencils—that their omnipresence will trigger "new forms of intimacy with machines and a new model of mind as machine."

The tone of the book, which is the result of some 400 interviews, is initially established by a beach scene, where very young children are playing with Merlin, a canny computerized tick-tack-toe machine. One child, frustrated at winning and then losing after having used the same strategy, flings the computer into the sand. "Cheater, I hope your brains break," he says. A second child responds, "Merlin doesn't 'know' if it cheats. It won't know if it breaks. It doesn't know if you break it." Adds a third child, capping the argument: "To cheat you have to know you are cheating. Knowing is part of cheating."

Turkle finds the conversation "striking . . . young children . . . argue the moral and metaphysical status of a machine on the basis of its psychology: Does the machine know what it is doing? does it have intentions, consciousness, feelings?" She attributes the quality of the conversation to the computer, which she says provokes such discussions because of its "betwixt and between" status: it has attributes that are associated with things both alive and not alive.

The author proceeds through other computer cultures, illustrating a growing tendency to regard the mind as "mechanized." We meet a computer science student who is perfectly comfortable with a description of herself as a "collection of programs" that operate independently and produce "her" through their interaction. We meet another for whom "thought is a by-product of local events between neurons" and for whom, therefore, there is no free will, no individual responsibility and no real creativity. He explains:

> You think you're making a decision, but are you really? All of a sudden, you think of something. Right? Wrong. It just filtered through—the consciousness processor just sits there and watches this cacophony of other processors and skims off the top what he thinks is the most important thing, one thing at a time.

Predictably, those most strongly com-

Susan Chace writes frequently about computers.

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mitted to seeing the computer as a "second self" are computer scientists who work in the field of artificial or machine intelligence, trying to model the mind's thinking processes on a machine. Their experiments range from attempts to encapsulate a physician's intuition in a set of rules a computer can imitate to trying to teach a computer to understand "natural language"—to know what Othello means when he says, about to blow out a candle and then kill his wife, "Put out the light, and then, put out the light."

These scientists routinely invade turf formally claimed by the neurosciences, psychology, linguistics and philosophy. They have "global aspirations," according to Turkle, and unusual priorities. She cites a lecture by Marvin Minsky, one of the most provocative thinkers at M.I.T. Minsky, who is currently engaged in, among other things, trying to get a computer to improvise jazz, told his audience that children shouldn't dissect frogs if the object of the exercise is to understand human beings. Interpreting, Turkle tells us that what Minsky thinks is important about life "is mind. And Minsky thinks it is obvious that understanding 'mind' means understanding 'structure and subroutine,' not the 'bloody mess of organic matter.'"

Turkle's investigation leads her to the conclusion that "Under pressure from the computer, the question of mind in relation to machine is becoming a central cultural preoccupation. It is becoming for us what sex was to the Victorians—threat and obsession, taboo and fascination."

Turkle's book has the desperate enthusiasm and impatience of the child going on a trip who asks before the car is out of the driveway, "Are we there yet?" Such impatience is understandable from someone who has seen, at very close range, the possibilities of the computer age. As wife and colleague of Seymour Papert, a computer science professor at M.I.T., she is intimately acquainted with his experiments in teaching math to toddlers. She knows that such computer-aided art forms as the interactive novel await us, and she gives a good sense of them: "You are Scarlett O'Hara opening the door to Tara. You are Rhett Butler, deciding to stay rather than leave."

But, generally, her enthusiasm distracts from some perceptive observations and, in the end, distorts reality. It prevents the author from noticing, for

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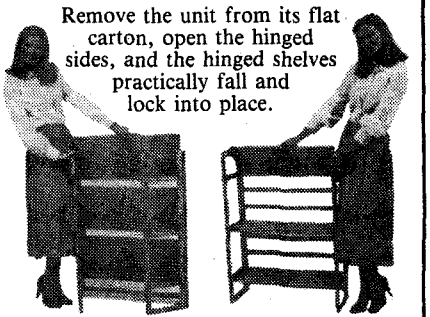

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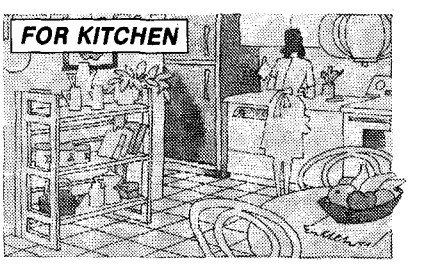

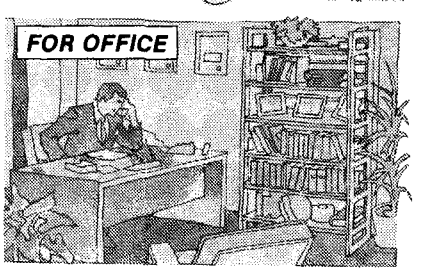

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example, that the home computer revolution has been a flop to date. Demand is down; analysts have slashed their sales estimates in half as consumers steadfastly refuse to buy despite marketing messages predicting that failure to do so will ruin their children's careers. Even I.B.M., so successful in the business and school markets, has taken it on the chin from the homeowner.

More important, the sort of computer involvement that leads to metaphysical questions about the user's relation to his machine isn't likely to occur on a mass level anytime soon. Most people are bypassing the opportunity to go one on one with their machine. Rather than figure out how to program it (devise intricate, elaborate sets of instructions) they prefer to buy ready-made software for their typing and arithmetic needs. This shortcut pertains not only to business, where time is money, but also, alas, to schools.

But Turkle herself admits that her subjects and their environment are somewhat rarefied. She describes at length a school she calls "Austen," in the Boston area, the "site of a broadly conceived research project involving the design of a special computer, the training of a group of teachers and a research program to study the children's progress. . . . This was not a school that 'brought in some computers' but a school that created conditions for the growth of a computer culture. The intention was to simulate a future where computers would be everyday objects in the life of the child."

As Turkle reports, some remarkable things happened. The children at Austen, who were under no pressure to "study computers," learned a computer language called Logo, largely invented by Seymour Papert. The language teaches mathematical concepts by getting the computer to draw on the screen. It introduces the notions of regression and infinity and makes profoundly creative work possible. Anne, a 9-year-old, made up a program in which birds flew across the sky and disappeared behind clouds. In the process of learning to place her art within the rules of a formal computational system, she taught herself some complicated math. Turkle's description of Anne's "negotiations" and "compromises" with the computer, together with a too brief description of female styles of working with computers, are among the book's best passages.

But Austen appears to be something of an anomaly. In 1984, an estimated $450 million worth of computers will be sold to elementary and secondary schools, largely for use as drill and practice tools. I.B.M., in addition, is having a lot of success with an experimental computerized "Writing to Read" program, an artful but creatively undemanding combination of talking computers and typewriters that teach a child to write whatever he can say. Another school, which eschews Logo experiments as unsuitable for the average learner, is trying to figure out a computer-based curriculum for its students. At Waterford, a school started in 1980 in Orem, Utah, to test Wicat computers and software, students in grades one through nine work at the computer for an hour a day. The children learn, for example, to push buttons in response to the computer's questions—which led one pigtailed youngster to tell *The Wall Street Journal* that "art is harder than computers, because you have to draw straight lines and color them in." □

Rescue Operations

JOSE YGLESIAS

SCUMBLER. *By William Wharton. Alfred A. Knopf. 256 pp. $14.95.*

The hero of William Wharton's new novel is a painter who calls himself a "nester": he is continually buying cheap parcels of land or renting abandoned places and turning them into makeshift but livable homes. His hiding places, he says. "I think all my paintings are probably hideouts too. I make up my own world, crawl in, then invite people to join me. This book is something like that, when I come to think about it. Look around, how do you like it here, inside my head? A bit messy, isn't it?" He asks this question two-thirds of the way into the novel, and you might forbearingly agree—so many are the pleasures in it, so grand the reservoir of admiration for his three previous novels—but you had better watch out. Wharton may be having you on, like Dostoyevsky in *The Possessed* apologizing for not being a better storyteller.

Even so, Wharton never lies to you; he is always direct and plain-spoken and unambiguous, like a man who keeps his eyes on yours as he tells you his story. If he doesn't put on the dog, as he might say, neither does he eschew the skills and ploys that the most elliptical of modernist writers have developed. In the above quotation there are strains of James Joyce and Gertrude Stein, but totally transmuted. He doesn't lean on precedent: he'd be writing this way no matter what—because he's a regular Joe and that's the way a regular Joe talks. Never for a moment do you feel that some literary notion has been imposed on his (or our) natural sensibilities.

Take the title, *Scumbler*. It seems the perfect epithet for an unsuccessful painter living in Paris with his wife and kids, engaged in more activities and possessed by more obsessions than a man in late middle age can handle. If the book were not prefaced by the dictionary definition of scumbling—"to modify the effect of a painting by overlaying parts of it with a thin application of opaque or semi-opaque color"—I should have thought of it, at least on a first impresson, as a modern picaresque novel about a man in midlife crisis, and not missed either its fun or humanity. Yet how much richer to see, at the same time, that his overlapping adventures amount to a multifaceted cubist self-portrait.

But enough fanciness; it would anger Wharton. Here then, under another name, is the middle-aged hero of *Dad* (and very likely the young man of *Birdy* and the sergeant of *A Midnight Clear*) at home in Paris pursuing his busy, settled life—painting, building nests, enjoying his wife and children. Mostly we learn about the first two. Still, this fellow Scumbler has warned us early on that although he's not writing much about his family, "I'm the nester and this is my home nest. Don't get confused by the flickerings or you'll never understand this book, what it's all about."

The heroes of Wharton's three earlier books are launched on rescue operations—to save a friend, a father, a platoon—but Scumbler is desperately trying to regain his belief in his art, a loss that has ruined him not only for paint-

Jose Yglesias, a novelist, also writes on Latin America.

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ing but for his family, too. So he sets out, in a sense, to rescue himself. He has always been inventive and fanciful, and he ventures many remedies, including a self-portrait in which he tries to step out of time and see himself in a fourth dimension—resulting in a likeness that is lifeless and somehow scary. But his most extended escapade is a trip to the south coast of Spain with a group of young motorcyclists, during which he enjoys with fear and guilt the attentions of a young girl. He runs home and tries to get the experience out of his system by painting a huge portrait of the motorcyclists; he builds another nest in the countryside; he throws a street *vernissage* for the motorcycle painting. Nothing works.

Every one of these and other incidents is, however, a marvel of interest for the reader (Wharton, after all, kept one enthralled for pages on end in *Birdy* with the courtship of a pair of canaries) but not for Scumbler. He knows he's an old man now and for him to question the life and art that he has chosen, or to contemplate its coming to a disillusioned end, is unbearable.

Suddenly he is forced to make his old choices over again: he receives an offer for a nice California nest that would solve all his financial problems. He decides, in accordance with his ideals, that he must turn it down. The decision gets him back to work, to his old life, but when he tells his wife after the fact, she protests, "You never think of anybody but yourself. You treat everybody and everything as if we're all part of one big painting, a painting of *your* life, a self-portrait, a *selfish* portrait, and we're all only background."

It is her first deeply felt complaint about their life together, and it shows him that his obsessions, his life's choices, his freedom, have impinged on others, cost them dearly. He has turned out to be the kind of man he wished not to be: an egotist.

He stays up all night reviewing his life. He thinks: "It must drive everybody else crazy being around these characters who won't relax and accept things as they are, are constantly trying to change, juggle everything so it's different, or, worse yet, if they *can't* change things; they're reconstructing, reinterpreting the so-called REALITY to make it *fit*." He feels the same about the story he has been telling us: he can't be just a reporter or a recorder. "But these *feelings* I've written here are true, true as I know how to be. They're *my* feelings."

He comes out of it all in a typical Scumbler way and he takes us with him, for he does not live for art alone, he is no Gully Jimpson. And we go along willingly. Even so, this funny-looking old man, with his wild gray beard, with his unbarbered hair tied into a ponytail, comes dangerously close to being, as Chesterton said about Dickens's characters, the sort of person we run to in fiction but run from in life.

On the dust jacket of each new book the pseudonymous William Wharton tells us another fact about his life. This time he says that he is a painter who also writes. I don't believe that for minute; it must be the other way around. □

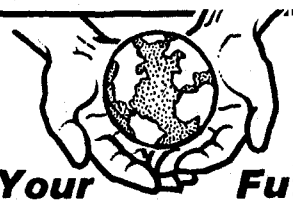
FILMS.

ANDREW KOPKIND

Purple Rain

Zeitgeist sniffers have been out in full force this summer, digging the Prince phenomenon with the obsessive passion of pigs rooting for truffles in the Dordogne. Rock critics have compared Prince to the early Ray Charles, to the dead Jimi Hendrix, to the sainted Jim Morrison, to James Brown, Mick Jagger and Tina Turner. The success of *Purple Rain*, the movie, recalls the generational breakthrough of *A Hard Day's Night*; one overheated writer declared it the best American film since *Citizen Kane*. The dizzying rampage of *Purple Rain*, the album, to the top of the charts makes Michael Jackson's summer *Victory* seem hollow and challenges Bruce Springsteen's title of Boss. In fact, not since Springsteen appeared in a vision to Jon Landau as the future of rock-and-roll (not to mention his own next career opening) have pop gurus been so enraptured by a rising star. We may be in for a very long siege.

The rise, which is by this time the ascendance, of Prince was both manipulated and spontaneous, as the appearances of cultural comets often are. Holed up in frosty Minneapolis with none but Mary Tyler Moore and Walter Mondale for neighborhood media support, Prince and his one-man band created a demonstration tape so impressive that in 1977 Warner Brothers Records signed him to a contract "in excess of $1 mil-



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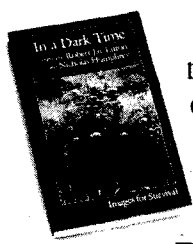

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lion," as it goes in the industry. But his first album, *For You*, never became a hit. Prince worked away on his music until his main chance came along.

It arrived last year in a propitious confluence of television, film and recording opportunities. Prince's 1983 album, *1999*, turned out to be an important crossover entry in the funk, punk and pop categories. His music videos brought a nice touch of neoromantic raunchiness into family rooms all over America. Back in Minnesota, Prince and his "management team" of Robert Cavallo, Joseph Ruffalo and Steven Fargnoli began shooting the movie that would mythologize the young rocker's life and promote a soundtrack album and an upcoming concert tour at the same time. The Prince conglomerate sat back and waited for the summons of history.

Saturation promotion and the clever construction of an original image can make a hit, but they cannot produce the kind of phenomenon Prince embodies. Something epochal, or at least decadal, is going on here, and it has to do with the way Prince expresses or responds to the tempers of the times. A serious and quite successful rock musician I know told me he thinks Prince "meets all the challenges of the eighties," just as, perhaps, M.T.M. engaged the 1970s and Mondale the 1940s. Prince is ambisexual, internationalist, multiracial and cosmically conscious. His music is alternately rhapsodic and minimalist. ("When Doves Cry," the first hit off the *Purple Rain* album and the basis for the movie's story line, makes a major musical departure by omitting a bass line, so that the key seems to change from major to minor as the listener moves away from the sound source.) His costume changes run from the itsiest bikini to Edwardian overdress. He is tender and tough, S&M, straight and gay, First World and Third, coal black, lily white and deep purple. In his lyrics, he seems comfortable—even enthusiastic—singing about fellatio, masturbation and nuclear holocaust. He has postulated the perfect party in the title single "1999," which was also the best funk song of last year. "Little Red Corvette," which followed it on the album and up the charts, had the catchiest honky automotive sound since the Beach Boys' "Fun, Fun, Fun." With one groove separating those two tunes, Prince gave a new meaning to eclecticism in rock. And in a few minutes on stage or on screen, he displays more kinds of ambiguity than could ever be found in a Shakespeare sonnet.

Prince's greatest commercial triumph is his movie, but it is not the perfect vehicle for his talents. The wrenching energy of the musical numbers contrasts abruptly with the languors of his acting, and the appealing ambiguities in his persona are overwhelmed by the literal banalities of the plot. The lyrics to "When Doves Cry" suggested to screenwriters Albert Magnoli and William Blinn a scenario much like Prince's official biography: an alienated and abandoned child of a racially mixed marriage repeats the emotional atrocities of his parents in his own sexual life and professional relationships until a redemptive love allows him to break on through to the other side. At last, the diffident and distant loner can reach out and touch someone. That is not a formula that can be handled convincingly without consummate command of character, camera and consciousness, none of which are immediately apparent in the production. No moment in the movie is more sophisticated than a Sprint commercial, and there are scenes played with such leaden amateurishness that one yearns for the slick technique of MTV.

The cast, which was assembled from the Minneapolis rock demimonde, has freshness going for it and little else. Apollonia Kotero, who is said to be Prince's squeeze in real life, plays his movie girlfriend with a lubricious lethargy that manages to seem sexy and look blank at the same time, rather like an alien temptress in an old *Star Trek* episode. Morris Day, who plays an unambiguously funky musician in competition with Prince for fame and favors, fits his jive stereotype so tightly that there is no room for human maneuver. Everyone else just falls into monotype, which may account for much of the movie's popularity in the mid-teen demographic. "They're just like everyone I know," a 15-year-old girl of my acquaintance reported upon seeing the movie. But I bet they're really just the way everyone she knows *acts*.

Prince alone stands out above the punk/funk mass because he is far more interesting than he acts. As the latest in a line of sexually ambiguous rock stars—from Jagger to David Bowie to Michael Jackson and beyond—he uses confusion more blatantly and effective-

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ly than any of his predecessors. Macho to a fault one minute, he camps like a drag queen without missing a beat the next. He exults as an adolescent stud, then throws out lyrics like "I'm in love with guys, it's the only way, 'cause you and I know we gotta die some day." His love scene with Kotero is erotically charged—the more so because both partners are partially clothed—but it suggests foreplay in a lesbian porno loop more than a post-adolescent heterosexual wet dream.

There are many uses of ambiguity, but Prince has found that it works to establish a certain authenticity amid the utter confusion of his generation. If my musician friend is right, that is how he meets the challenge of the 1980s. For now, nobody does it better. □

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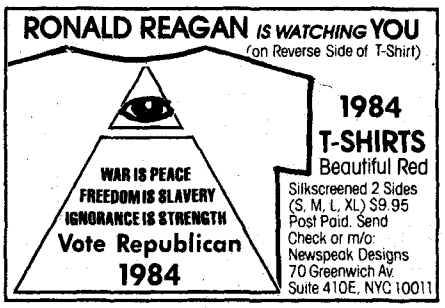

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2022

■	C	A	T	O	N	I	N	E	T	A	I	L	S	■
D	■	S	■	P	■	L	■	S	■	F	■	E	■	I
I	N	S	T	I	L	L	■	C	A	R	T	O	O	N
S	■	U	■	N	■	N	■	A	■	I	■	N	■	S
C	O	R	N	I	C	E	■	P	U	C	C	I	N	I
R	■	E	■	N	■	S	■	E	■	A	■	N	■	G
E	N	S	I	G	N	S	■	D	U	N	G	E	O	N
D	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	I
I	N	D	I	A	N	A	■	R	E	P	R	O	O	F
T	■	I	■	L	■	R	■	A	■	R	■	N	■	I
A	S	S	A	Y	E	R	■	C	A	U	S	T	I	C
B	■	D	■	S	■	A	■	E	■	S	■	R	■	A
L	I	A	I	S	O	N	■	M	I	S	S	I	O	N
E	■	I	■	U	■	G	■	I	■	I	■	A	■	T
■	U	N	I	M	P	E	A	C	H	A	B	L	E	■

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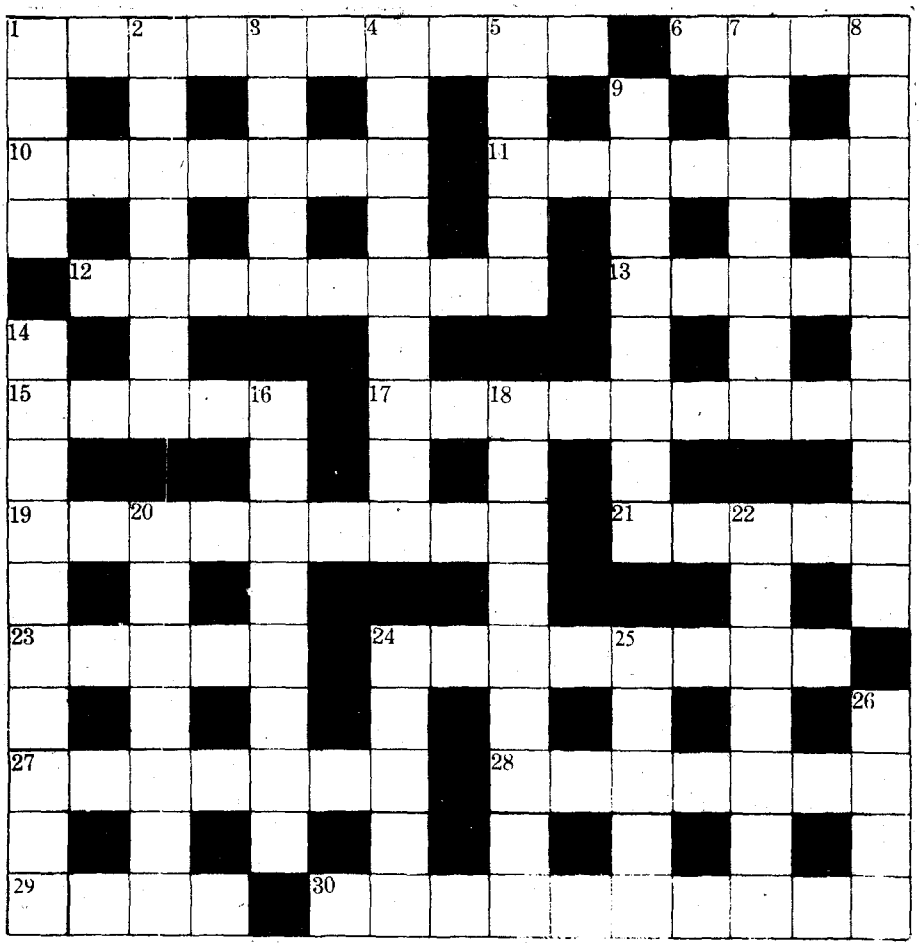
Crossword Puzzle No. 2023

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Where these puzzles go—giving some tone to things? (10)
6 A chemist has no trouble getting up a little steam! (4)
10 and 26 down Sow this? It's in the bag! (But don't buy one!) (1,3,2,1,4)
11 It takes a lot of weight to get to the point of the annuity being shared. (7)
12 Once made a change for something like Overlord. (4,4)
13 To remove something takes ages at the capital of England. (5)
15 One might expect hail going to one in Washington. (5)
17 One might have designs for a typical one of Triumph on it, when misplaced, etc. (9)
19 Might have been given by those who pirated with a couple of bits missing. (2,7)
21 Big, for a city! (5)
23 It might be fitting for a plumber, at least! (5)
24 No cage made by such, according to Lovelace, or brains addled by it. (4,4)
27 You'll get the measles if you have to massage a girl! (7)
28 What some call this sounds like a couple of alligators. (7)
29 The old actor John made quite a picture, obviously. (4)
30 You might consider your freedom in this altogether—the state of being contingent. (10)

DOWN

1 See 24 down
2 Fall connected with oil refinement. (Is that why the Marines landed?) (7)
3 One is confused by such a racket! (5)
4 Break up what is shed in tragedy with what an actor takes seriously. (4,5)
5 The wrong route might describe a real social error. (5)
7 If you do, the copy is supposed to be flattering. (7)
8 The so-called generation a few years back with the French and English musical group? (3,7)
9 One who gives backing to the C.I.A. organization? (It might be just a plant!) (8)
14 See 24 down
16 They once kept one warm in winter, and sort of fell around the girl, to a point. (8)
18 I.B.M. tries to maintain such an image, but it makes the act poorer. (9)
20 Your language may be irrelevant if you do. . . (7)
22 . . . but things that do this are relevant. (7)
24, 1 down and 14 Succinct report of a Caesarean operation? (1,4,1,3,1,9)
25 A number of young creatures ponder things so! (5)
26 See 10 across

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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